

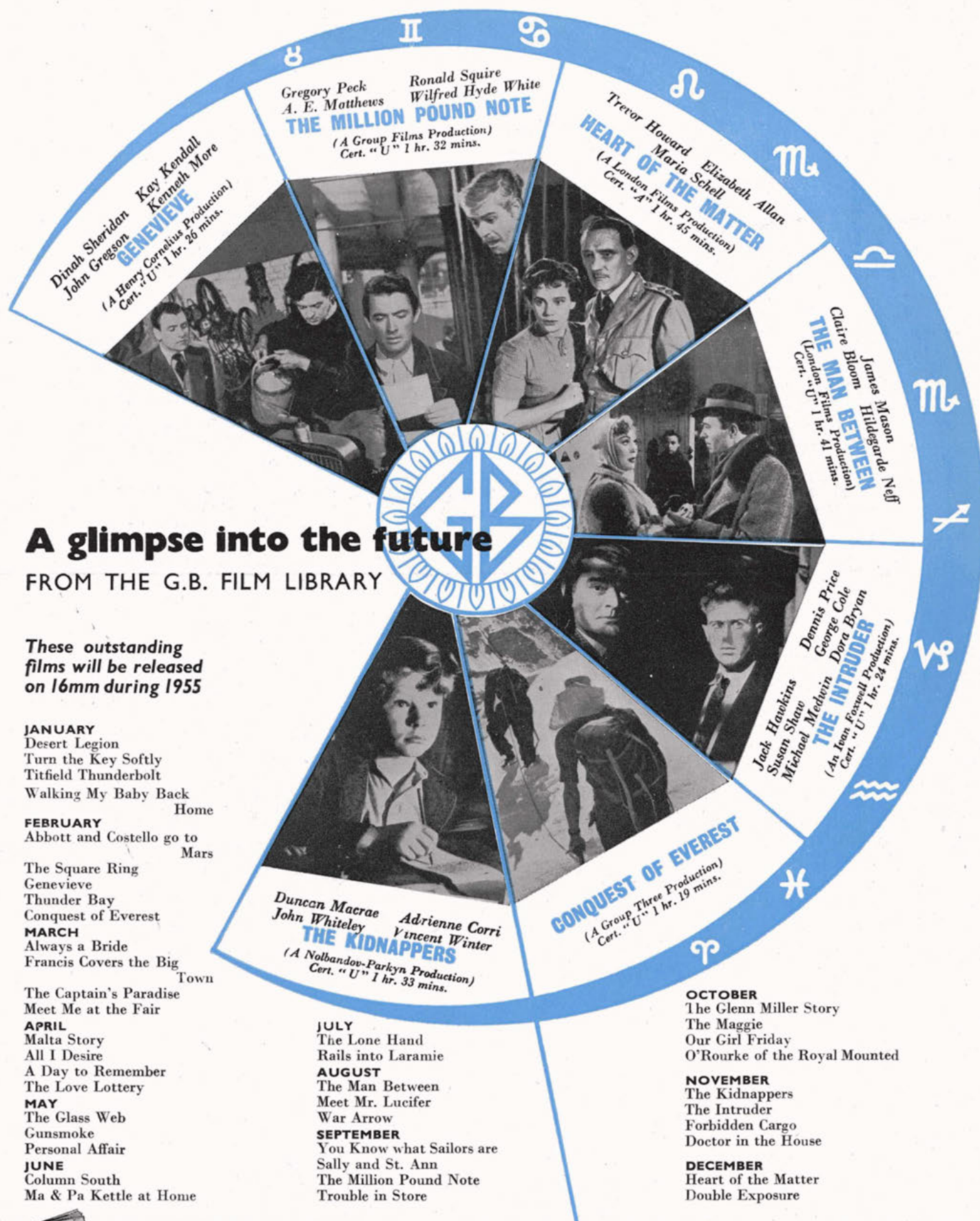
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A GUIDE TO CURRENT FILMS

Films considered likely to be of special interest to SIGHT AND SOUND readers are denoted by one, two or three stars.

- *****ADVENTURES OF ROBINSON CRUSOE** (*United Artists*) Bunuel makes of Defoe's story a gripping and marvellous study of human solitude. (Dan O'Herlihy, James Fernandez; Pathecolor.)
- BAKER OF VALORGUE, THE** (*Studio One*). Artless bucolic comedy, with faint echoes of *La Femme du Boulanger*. (Fernandel; director, Henri Verneuil.)
- ***BAREFOOT CONTESSA, THE** (*United Artists*) Joseph Mankiewicz' all-talking account of the improbable life and times of a film star. *Reviewed*. (Ava Gardner, Humphrey Bogart, Edmond O'Brien; Technicolor.)
- BEAU BRUMMELL** (*M-G-M.*) Lavish, foolish, anachronistic costume piece, based on Clyde Fitch's Broadway wow of 1890. Only Robert Morley and Peter Ustinov, adopting the lusty old Mansfield style, manage to make anything of it. (Stewart Granger, Elizabeth Taylor; director, Curtis Bernhardt; Eastman Colour.)
- ***BROKEN LANCE** (*Fox*) A good-looking, heavy-weight CinemaScope Western, with Spencer Tracy as a cattle King Lear. (Robert Wagner, Richard Widmark, Jean Peters; director, Edward Dmytryk. Colour: De Luxe.)
- ***CARMEN JONES** (*Fox*) Broadway success (which made a modern negro fable from Merimée's story and retained Bizet's music) into CinemaScope. Intriguing idea; talented cast; but very mediocre direction. (Dorothy Dandridge, Harry Belafonte, Pearl Bailey; director, Otto Preminger. Colour: De Luxe.)
- ***CARRINGTON, V.C.** (*Independent*) Anthony Asquith's smooth film version of Dorothy and Campbell Christie's stolid play about the court-martial of a V.C. Major for the conversion of army funds. Sound entertainment, apart from irritating comic side-tracks. (David Niven, Margaret Leighton.)
- ***DIVIDED HEART, THE** (*G.F.D.*) Yugoslav woman brings legal action to recover her child from German foster-parents: remarkable real-life subject, sincerely though tentatively dramatised, with a striking performance by Yvonne Mitchell. *Reviewed*. (Cornell Borchers, Armin Dahlen; director, Charles Crichton.)
- DRUMBEAT** (*Warners*) Dauntless frontiersman Alan Ladd engaged with Indians and renegade white men: standard horse opera. (Audrey Dalton; director, Delmar Daves. CinemaScope and WarnerColor.)
- ***FOR BETTER, FOR WORSE** (*A.B.-Pathé*). A nice young English couple with their domestic and financial problems: conventional but quite pleasantly handled and acted light comedy. (Dirk Bogarde, Susan Stephen; director, J. Lee-Thompson. Eastman Colour.)
- GARDEN OF EVIL** (*Fox*) Gold-hunting and Apache-dodging in CinemaScope scenery: good camera-work, and a ferociously determined attempt at a *femme fatale* by Susan Hayward. (Gary Cooper, Richard Widmark; director, Henry Hathaway. Technicolor.)
- ***GREAT ADVENTURE, THE** (*Films de France*) Sucksdorff's first feature, a reminiscent account of two children's discovery of the natural world: wonderful animal observation. *Reviewed*.
- ***HANSEL AND GRETEL** (*R.K.O.*) Straight adaptation by Padraic Colum of the Humperdinck operetta, interpreted by puppets operated by electronic controls. Animation excellent; design without distinction. *Reviewed*. (Producer, Michael Myerberg; director, John Paul. Technicolor.)
- HUMAN DESIRE** (*Columbia*) A new and unfaithful version of Zola's *La Bête Humaine*: violent and undistinguished, apart from characteristically efficient performances by Gloria Grahame and Broderick Crawford. (Glenn Ford; director, Fritz Lang.)
- KING RICHARD AND THE CRUSADERS** (*Warners*) Duelling and jousting among the Plantagenets and the Saracens: obstreperous CinemaScope pastiche of Scott's *The Talisman*. (George Sanders, Rex Harrison, Virginia Mayo; director, David Butler. WarnerColor.)
- ***LILACS IN THE SPRING** (*Republic*) Traumatic Neagle anthology in which the star, spanning the centuries, plays Nell Gwynn, Queen Victoria, and wife and daughter to Errol Flynn. Quite overwhelming. (David Farrar; director, Herbert Wilcox. Trucolor.)
- ***LIVING DESERT, THE** (*Walt Disney*) Disney's first full-length Nature documentary, set in the Great American Desert. Some outstanding photography enables the film to overcome the familiar fatuities of musical and verbal commentary. (Director, James Algar. Print by Technicolor.)
- MAD ABOUT MEN** (*G.F.D.*) Glynis Johns again impersonates a mermaid; predictable, amphibious comedy. (Donald Sinden, Margaret Rutherford; director, Ralph Thomas. Technicolor.)
- ***MAGNIFICENT OBSESSION** (*G.F.D.*) Rich playboy regenerated by love for a blind woman: smooth, confident, soulful tearjerker based on a novel by Lloyd C. (*The Robe*) Douglas. The stars shine, Agnes Moorehead dazzles. (Jane Wyman, Rock Hudson; director, Douglas Sirk. Technicolor.)
- *****MODERN TIMES** (*United Artists*) Reissue of Chaplin's richly comic and tender fable of a little man in a big industrial world. *Reviewed*. (Paulette Goddard, Chester Conklin.)
- ***MOUTON A CINQ PATTES, LE** (*Miracle*) Fernandel playing an old father and his five contrasted sons, brought together for a family reunion: thinnish comedy, with some genuinely funny moments. (Françoise Arnoul; director, Henri Verneuil.)
- ***PANE, AMORE E FANTASIA** (*Curzon*) Strenuously bright Italian comedy of village life, with skin-deep neo-realistic trimmings: amiable performances by de Sica and Gina Lollobrigida. (Director, Luigi Comencini.)
- ***PHFFFT!** (*Columbia*) Intriguingly titled light-weight comedy concerned with quarrel, divorce, reconciliation: agreeably the mixture as before. (Judy Holliday, Jack Lemmon, Jack Carson; director, Mark Robson.)
- ***PINOCCHIO** (*R.K.O.*) Probably the best of the unspoiled Disney: his second feature-length cartoon, based on the nineteenth century Italian children's book by Collodi. (Technicolor.)
- RING OF FEAR** (*Warners*) A homicidal maniac loose in a circus, with Mickey Spillane himself as private detective. Production values provided by the Clyde Beatty circus do not compensate for distasteful brutality. (Sean McClory, Pat O'Brien; director, James Edward Grant. CinemaScope and WarnerColor.)
- SEA SHALL NOT HAVE THEM, THE** (*Eros*) Four men in a dinghy, and the attempts of the rescue services to locate them. Competent direction and loyal stars waterlogged by poor script. (Michael Redgrave, Dirk Bogarde, Anthony Steel; director, Lewis Gilbert.)
- ***SEVEN BRIDES FOR SEVEN BROTHERS** (*M-G-M.*) Vigorous musical, set in Oregon a hundred years ago, with a backwoods version of the Rape of the Sabine Women: very gay, original and exhilarating. *Reviewed*. (Jane Powell, Howard Keel; director, Stanley Donen. CinemaScope and Ansco Color.)
- STUDENT PRINCE, THE** (*M-G-M.*) The dear old operetta would hardly recognise itself, all CinemaScoped up and no place to go. Edmund Purdom "sings" effectively for Mario Lanza, in good stereophonic voice off-screen. (Ann Blyth, Louis Calhern; director, Richard Thorpe. Ansco Color.)
- ***SVENGALI** (*Renown*) The fine old barnstormer quite affectionately re-mounted, with Donald Wolfitt in his element and Hildegard Neff in good exotic form. (Terence Morgan; director, Noel Langley. Eastman Colour.)
- ***THIS IS CINERAMA** (*Cinerama Productions*) The biggest of all the big screens: and, as a stunt, undoubtedly the best. Plenty of elaborate gimmicks, a few indifferent items, and a highly impressive airplane tour of the U.S.A. (Producers, Lowell Thomas and Merian C. Cooper. Print by Technicolor.)
- THREE RING CIRCUS** (*Paramount*) Dean Martin and Jerry Lewis find employment in a circus: more sentiment than usual, fewer laughs. (Joanne Dru, Zsa Zsa Gabor; director, Joseph Pevney. VistaVision and Technicolor.)
- *****UMBERTO D.** (*British Lion*) The tragedy and loneliness of old age described by de Sica and Zavattini with a rare intensity and passion. A masterpiece. (Carlo Battisti, Maria Pia Casilio.)
- WHITE CHRISTMAS** (*Paramount*) A lavishly mounted musical, sacrificing some cheerful and attractive talents on a maudlin story about the hardships of a retired general. (Danny Kaye, Bing Crosby, Rosemary Clooney, Vera-Ellen; director, Michael Curtiz. VistaVision and Technicolor.)
- ***WOMAN'S WORLD** (*Fox*) Three salesmen, and their wives, compete to enter the American business aristocracy: slick, synthetic production (formula: three parts *How to Marry a Millionaire* to one part *Executive Suite*). (Clifton Webb, Van Heflin, June Allyson, Lauren Bacall, Fred MacMurray; director, Jean Negulesco. CinemaScope and Technicolor.)

SIGHT AND SOUND

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ON THE COVER: Katharine Hepburn and script of *Summertime* in a corner of Venice railway station.
See also page 138. (Photo by Per-Olow)

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THE FRONT PAGE

Looking Back

1954?

A Period of Transition, of course. Contact with the contemporary cinema, as it passes by, becomes more like a roller-coaster ride, as we are switchbacked from CinemaScope to wide-screen and back again, with stereophonic sound whistling like the wind through our ears. All the same, in looking back we find torches still alight for more than 20 new films of various kinds. No doubt the total seems paltry to those readers who write to suggest that we don't seem to be as big-hearted and enthusiastic as we used to be (to whom we can only reply that None of Us is Getting Any Younger), but it strikes us, under the circumstances, as a quite gratifying number.



OLD AND TRUE

It is always pleasant when time remembered is not grief forgotten, particularly so in the case of two great revivals this year. Chaplin's *Modern Times* and Donskoi's *Maxim Gorky* trilogy magnificently pass all tests.

FILM OF THE YEAR

The only new film that in twenty years' time is likely to give as firm a pleasure as these two revivals is Luis Bunuel's strange and powerful *Robinson Crusoe*, justly described by one critic as "a classic of a classic."

BEST OF THE REST

From Japan, that fascinating and beautifully decorated tragedy of manners, *Gate of Hell*, directed by Kinugasa.

From Sweden, *The Great Adventure*, in which Sucksdorff gives us some unique sketches of the animal world.

From the U.S.A., a very mixed bag including the modest but unusually forthright *Riot in Cell Block 11*: a bright musical, *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers*: Lang's *The Big Heat*, an incisive melodrama in the almost forgotten Chandler style, and Hitchcock's *Rear Window*, his most sustained and cold-blooded piece of story-telling in a long while: and two small-scale thrillers, *Drive a Crooked Road* and *Pushover*, showing a new director, Richard Quine, with a definite personality. Also, two films that got lost between issues of this magazine: to the makers of that attractive western *Hondo* (directed by John Farrow for John Wayne) and that quiet, nostalgic costume piece *The Actress* (written by Ruth Gordon, directed by George Cukor), our apologies for a delayed tribute.

From Britain, three distinctively flavoured comedies, of which one, René Clément's *Knave of Hearts*, had a French sauce not appreciated by most critics but palatably shrewd and ironic to us: Robert Hamer's *Father Brown*, drily inconsequent and civilised, and Alexander Mackendrick's *The Maggie*, with its sly character-drawing of a regional community.

OTHER HALF OF THE BILL

Children feature in two of the year's best short films, the Russian *Chuk and Gek*, a charming and simple adventure story, and the British *Thursday's Children*, a vivid, sensitive account of the world of the deaf. Actually two years old, but only given a public showing this year, *The Pleasure Garden* brought a rare and welcome touch of personal fantasy. So did U.P.A.'s *Unicorn in the Garden*, a completely successful adaptation from Thurber, the unit's one really satisfying work in a thin year.

Other things that agreeably filled out programmes were *Bow Bells*, impressions of London's East End set to music-hall songs; and three well-observed nature studies, the Russian *Life in the Arctic*, the Hungarian *Fight for Life*, and (but stop your ears) *The Living Desert*.

OUT OF THE BLUE

Three surprises, all of which fall into the category of "pleasant trifles," were *The Little Fugitive* (no West End showing), the idyll of a small boy on Coney Island: an almost straight CinemaScope record of a Broadway revue (the year's most appropriate use of the process) with some engaging talent, *New Faces*: and the derivative but high-spirited Greek comedy, *Windfall in Athens*.

NATIONAL FILM THEATRE

Now that "dropping into the local" is no longer what it used to be, Londoners have the very real alternative of dropping into the National Film Theatre, where the films are nearly always worthwhile and the screen doesn't change. Its year began with what must have been, for many people, a revelation of the extraordinary Stroheim; a ballet season, with some good early material including films of Pavlova, drew many devotees; and running at the moment is a rich season of musicals, which has already revived the laconic *42nd Street*, Lubitsch's beguiling *One Hour with You*, memories of vintage Astaire and Rogers (notably *The Gay Divorce*) and of Britain's most charming musical star, Jessie Matthews, in *Evergreen*. Now it moves to the modern M-G-M tradition headed by Minnelli and Kelly.

Its new films have included a telling short-story film of a Civil War episode, *Time out of War*, by Denis Sanders, and a serious, solid Polish study of delinquent youth, *Five Boys from Barska Street*. And "50 Years of Film" has enterprisingly rediscovered some interesting early films including *Cabiria*, Lubitsch's *Madame DuBarry* and Feyder's *Crainquebille*.

PLAYERS OF THE YEAR

There has been much good acting, notably in American films, to enjoy. Most remarkable of all, perhaps, Marlon Brando in *On the Waterfront* and Shirley Booth in the unjustly despised *About Mrs. Leslie*. Humphrey Bogart in *The Caine Mutiny* and Fredric March in *Executive Suite* created memorable portraits; Gérard Philipe and Joan Greenwood perfectly set the tone of *Knave of Hearts*; Yvonne Mitchell impressed in *The Divided Heart*, Spencer Tracy delighted in *The Actress*. Among newcomers, Jack Lemmon proved an equal partner for the delicious Judy Holliday in *It Should Happen to You* and Phffft! Neville Brand was highly effective in *Riot in Cell Block 11*, and Geraldine Page in *Hondo*; and, despite two unrewarding parts and films, it looks as if we have an interesting new talent in Diane Cilento.

IN THE MARGIN

Freaks' Corner is unhesitatingly filled by *Johnny Guitar*, the first Kraft-Ebbing western, and *The Barefoot Contessa*, probably not the last Kraft-Ebbing study of one of those women who are just helpless mixed-up beautiful animals.

And finally, a note on the omission of three films of undoubted, but to us spurious, skill: *On the Waterfront*, *Salaire de la Peur*, *Les Orgueilleux*. Phffft!

I N T H E P I C T U R E



FRENCH NOTES

GENE MOSKOWITZ writes: There has been internal bickering here recently within the film industry, concerned mainly with the future of co-production and the growth of American production. Opposition to co-production was crystallised when it became suddenly apparent that France had hardly anything it could call its own to enter in the Venice Festival. This led to the cry that co-production has slowly robbed France of a completely national cinema, and that its snowballing effect is something to be fought and feared. Even Jacques Flaud, of the governmental Centre du Cinéma, came out against the loss of the

"great French film past," and put in a plea for reduction of this type of production and a return to typically French subjects. However, once started, the spore of co-production grows, and the fact that most of the big money-makers of the last few years (*Le Salaire de la Peur*, *Les Belles de Nuit*, *Le Petit Monde de Don Camillo*, *Lucrèce Borgia*, etc.) have been co-productions is something that will give continuance to this type of film-making.

International influence is making itself felt in a series of films mainly influenced by and imitative of the American scene. The first and most flagrant is the hardboiled private eye school which was made a staple here by the phenomenon of Eddie Constan-

Left: Leslie Caron in "The Glass Slipper," directed by Charles Walters from the Herbert and Eleanor Farjeon musical version of "Cinderella." Below, left: Ali Baba in the robbers' cave. Fernandel stars in this new comedy by Jacques Becker, shot mainly in Morocco. Right: a grouping of characteristic style by the great Abel Gance, who returns to film Dumas' "La Tour de Nesle," with Pierre Brasseur and Silvana Pampanini.

tine. Constantine is an American singer who languished here for years until, by a lucky coincidence, he was cast as Lemmy Caution in the first Peter Cheyney film, *Le Môme Vert-de-Gris*. Directed by Bernard Borderie, this parodied U.S.-type films of this genre and carried everything a few steps further. Constantine—who does have a brash and appealing personality—caught on immediately, and his successive two films were big box-office here.

In the wash of this are a batch of films with such titles as *Série Noir*, *Pas de Souris dans le Bizness*, *Votre Devoué Blake* (Constantine again, directed by Jerry Epstein who was once a gagwriter for Chaplin), *A Toi de Jouer Callaghan* (with Charlie Chaplin Jr. as another Cheyney character), *Les Pépés font la Loi*, *Chéri Bibi*, *Pas de Coup Dur pour Johnny*. Also involved in this are two American directors, Jules Dassin and John Berry. Dassin is making a completely milieu-type gangster film, *Du Rififi chez les Hommes*, in which a whole slew of low-life characters are wiped out, and John Berry has the ubiquitous Constantine for *Ca Va Barder*.

H. G. Clouzot is making *Les Diaboliques*, which though a murder tale will probably transcend these others in interest, importance and treatment. Here Simone Signoret and Vera Clouzot are a couple of school-mistresses who come together to kill a common lover in Paul Meurisse. Jacques Becker is planning an *Arsène Lupin* with Gérard Philipe, but will first do another Annette Wademant script in *Voulez-Vous Danser Madame*, a Becker-eye view of the 'twenties on the Riviera. More in his entomological line no doubt.



MUSICAL CINERAMA

ARTHUR JACOBS writes: Gross musical insensitivity marked the opening presentation of Cinerama at the London Casino, and the technical improvements in sound reproduction accordingly went to waste.

These improvements, as they strike a musician, are two. First, the frequency range is from 30 to 15,000 cycles per second—that is, low enough for the fundamental tone of every note of the piano but the bottom two, and high enough to reproduce reasonably even the harmonics of the highest-pitched instruments. This is almost as wide a range as on a first-class modern gramophone, and considerably wider than that given by the magnetic tapes of CinemaScope. The second improvement, which is not of course exclusive to Cinerama, is in the channelling of sound through several loudspeakers.

Despite the frequency range, however, the sound heard was disproportionately weak in the bass. (Whether this is an inherent defect, or due to faulty handling, I do not know.) The channelling of sound was highly effective; the two sets of trumpets in a scene from *Aida* really did seem to come from opposite sides of the stage. The marching bagpipes and drums at the Edinburgh Festival Tattoo (mis-called by the commentator "The Gathering of the Clans") also sounded splendidly. But when a church choir was shown walking and singing, the "procession" effect was merely caricatured by the suddenness with which a new loudspeaker came into action.

The choir, in a simulated church, sang Handel's *Hallelujah Chorus* (recorded half a tone sharp), the producers apparently mistaking this work for a piece of church music with organ accompaniment. The mandolin in the Venetian sequence was over-amplified to trombone strength. The Vienna Boys' Choir, also over-amplified, sang a mangled version of *The Blue Danube*; they were shown in a park and were said by the commentator to have been just rounded up from the streets, a claim that was justified only for the piano that accompanied them. The extracts from *Aida* at the Scala, Milan, were all of ballet and spectacle, with not a note of solo singing—admirably chosen for those opera lovers who rather dislike music.

The few minutes of sound alone were devoted to orchestral sonorities, not to genuine demonstration material, nor to genuine music, but to an *ad hoc* "composition" of the purest Hollywood hokum, with a commentary to match. (Sample: "the star performers of the orchestra, the violins. . .") The score that accompanied the film's American travelogue from the air, which might have provided a first-class opportunity for commissioning music from a real composer, was instead made up of more hokum, but much louder than usual and so more sickening.

Odile Versois and Alec Guinness in Robert Hamer's new Technicolor comedy, "To Paris with Love." Others involved in an Englishman's adventures in Paris are Elina Labourdette and Vernon Gray.



WHY WAR?

"The British can take it—again that phrase from the war reaches out into the dubious atmosphere of what passes for peace," remarked the film critic of *The Times* in his review of *The Sea Shall Not Have Them*. "While the war was actually on this rough approximation to reality served admirably, but, now that it is some distance away, the inadequacies of the formula, its failure imaginatively to illumine physical ordeal and spiritual experience, becomes more obvious." It is a curious fact that since *They Who Dare*, *The Purple Plain* and *The Sea Shall Not Have Them* a whole series of films about the last war, all centred on physical endurance, "the stiff upper lip and the rugged jaw," have begun production. *The Battle of the River Plate*, *Above Us the Waves* and *Cockleshell Heroes* describe naval exploits, *The Dam Busters* celebrates

an R.A.F. achievement and *The Colditz Story* some p.o.w. adventures. Presumably the cycle has been encouraged by the success of *The Cruel Sea*; but one wonders now whether saturation-point for the public will not soon be reached.

Anyway, as *The Times* critic suggests, "it is time the war was seen in broader perspective." (*The Divided Heart* is the only recent British film that has tried to do this.) Until a year or two ago, there was a spate of similar if more violent films from the U.S.A., but these could be directly attributed to the Korean war. The present series here would seem to exist in a vacuum, and a vacuum that deserves to be broken. "The war," as Fred Majdalany wrote in the *Daily Mail*, "was not just a kind of amiable adventure story, yet more and more films are treating it as though it were. . . I suggest that they do a dis-service. . ."

Spencer Tracy and Robert Ryan in "Bad Day at Black Rock," melodrama set in a small western town, produced by Dore Schary and directed by John Sturges.





Laslo Benedek directing Hilde Krahl (right) and Ursula Herking (left), a cabaret star chosen for a dramatic role, in a scene from "Kinder, Mutter und ein General."

BENEDEK IN HAMBURG

FRANCIS KOVAL writes: When the veteran German producer Eric Pommer acquired the film rights of Herbert Reinecker's "Kinder, Mutter und ein General" ("Children, Mothers and a General," shortly to be published in English), he sent the novel to Laslo Benedek, director of the remarkably impressive film of *Death of a Salesman*.

"I fell for the subject right away," says Benedek, now at work on the film in Hamburg.

In the last weeks of World War II, six women arrive at a German village, to fetch their sons who have been evacuated there with their school; they find the village in the front line of battle, their boys in the army as volunteers. Full of emotional patriotism and adolescent thirst for adventure, the boys refuse to leave off fighting, and their mothers' pleas to the Captain and the General gain nothing. The dramatic episodes that follow, set against a raging battle, reveal the different human attitudes of mothers and sons to the bewildering reality of war. When, at the end, all the men have departed to make a last stand against the Russians, the women left behind in a shattered dug-out have only one thought: "We have been forgotten again. We shall always be forgotten as long as human problems are solved by force of arms. . . ."

"It is not an exhilarating film, and it is not meant to be," Benedek says. "But I hope it will be stirring, particularly for all those people who sit back today with the feeling that 'war is nonsense but nothing can be done about it.' And in this kind of story there is no room for compromise or a contrived happy ending."

Laslo Benedek (Hungarian by birth, and speaking fluent German) seems to have inspired the German technicians and his carefully chosen cast with a rare kind of enthusiasm. There are some famous players—Hilde

Krahl, Ewald Balser (seen in Pabst's *The Trial*)—but no star parts. It is a curious detail, incidentally, that when the unit went on location for the battle scenes, no backgrounds within 100 miles could be found to represent destruction, and the "ruins" of war were finally built in the *Lüneburger Heide*.

A technical point worth mentioning is the use of the "Garutso-Plas-torama" process, which ensures a depth and clarity of focus similar to that of VistaVision. Eric Pommer has acquired the patent of this process for all European countries, and is enthusiastic about the results achieved in two films, one in colour and one (Benedek's) in black-and-white. About the latter, Pommer says: "I realise that it will probably be attacked from both sides in Germany. The militarists will resent its anti-war tendency, the pacifists will find it not outspoken enough. But I don't care. There will be some, I feel sure, who will realise the basic honesty of its drama."

Stanley Kramer directs his first film, "Not as a Stranger," from a best-selling novel about a doctor's career. Centre, cameraman Franz Planer, right, star Olivia de Havilland. Other players are Robert Mitchum and Frank Sinatra.



WORK IN PROGRESS

France

René Clair: a new comedy, *L'Optimiste*, with Gérard Philipe.

Claude Autant-Lara: *L'Affaire des Poisons*, historical drama with Michèle Morgan. (Widescreen: Eastmancolor.)

Yves Allegret: *Oasis*, desert story by Joseph Kessel, with Michèle Morgan, Pierre Brasseur, Cornell Borchers and locations in Morocco. (CinemaScope: Eastmancolor.)

Georges Rouquier: documentary biography of Arthur Honegger, featuring an interview with him, shot mainly in Switzerland.

Great Britain

Anatole Litvak: Rattigan's *The Deep Blue Sea*, with Vivien Leigh. (CinemaScope: Technicolor.)

Peter Glenville: *The Prisoner*, adapted by Bridget Boland from her own play, with Alec Guinness and Jack Hawkins.

Alexander Mackendrick: *The Lady Killers*, a comedy by William Rose.

Frank Launder: *Geordie*, Scots comedy from a novel by David Walker, with Alastair Sim.

U.S.A.

King Vidor: *Man Without a Star*, a western with Kirk Douglas. (Widescreen: Technicolor.)

Alfred Hitchcock: *The Trouble with Harry*, thriller with small-town setting.

John Forsythe, Mildred Dunnock, Edmund Gwenn. (VistaVision: Technicolor.)

Joseph L. Mankiewicz: *Guys and Dolls* for Sam Goldwyn, with Marlon Brando, Jean Simmons, Frank Sinatra, Vivian Blaine. (Technicolor.)

Fritz Lang: *Moonfleet*, from J. Meade Faulkner's smuggling story, produced by John Houseman, with Stewart Granger, Joan Greenwood. (CinemaScope: Technicolor.)

Gene Kelly - Stanley Donen: *It's Always Fair Weather*, new musical with Kelly, Cyd Charisse, Dolores Gray, Michael Kidd. (CinemaScope: Technicolor.)

CAVALCANTI IN BRAZIL

CATHERINE DE LA ROCHE writes: Four years after returning to Brazil in 1949, Cavalcanti made *O Canto do Mar* (*Song of the Sea*), shown recently in Britain by the New London Film Society. In that short time, the wherewithal to produce a picture of this quality had been conjured forth from next to nothing. As long ago as the silent era (when Cavalcanti was with the Paris *avant-garde*) Brazil produced some excellent films—notably Mario Peixoto's surrealist *Limite*—which, thanks to the cine-club movement, are gradually winning international recognition. But during the first two decades of talkies, while Cavalcanti was in Britain pioneering documentary and later producing and directing features, Brazilian production was virtually confined to the routine commercial movie. Cheaply made, these films—especially the famous “carnival” quickies, with Rio's leading variety stars to popularise the year's song hits—were designed for the home market and did quite well there.

About 1947, a general artistic renaissance began in Brazil. Franco Zampari, wealthy industrialist and genuine enthusiast, founded the Teatro Brasileiro de Comedia in Sao Paulo. From its amateur beginnings, when it was greatly influenced by the local British dramatic society headed by Alexander Wellington, it became the country's leading theatre and the centre from which much of the new film talent was recruited. Zampari also founded the Vera Cruz studios, where Cavalcanti took charge of production.

When he arrived, followed by technicians from Britain and other countries, everything had to be started from scratch—there was no administrative or technical organisation, nowhere to hire props and costumes. His idea was to develop a national cinema gradually, drawing on the wealth of native talent, folklore and tradition. But the inexperienced film-makers were too hasty and too ambitious. Though by 1953 several of their pictures had won international prizes at festivals, their reborn industry was temporarily bankrupt.

As a whole, however, the progress—though not as great as Cavalcanti may have hoped—is impressive. It is largely the result of his influence; and this, despite a good deal of feuding, is generally recognised in Brazil. Cavalcanti set the standards high, it was he who discovered and guided the outstanding new talent, he who encouraged the development of a splendid film institute. Among the personalities are new directors like Lima Barreto (*O Cangaceiro*), the designer Carybe, many gifted singers, actors and dancers; and prominent among the technicians are some from Britain, including cameramen “Chick” Fowle and Bob Huke.

Cavalcanti has produced four films and directed three in Brazil. But his great prestige has not prevented them from having a mixed reception there. Even *O Canto do Mar*, made



An exterior from Cavalcanti's “*O Canto do Mar*.”

for his own company Kino Filmes and described by him as the only one of which he is “not ashamed,” has been criticised as remote in spirit from Brazilian actuality. Its masterly pictorial style was appreciated—and studied as such, for the Brazilians are extraordinarily quick to learn in order to adapt newly acquired knowledge to their own purposes—and it received a Brazilian award. But what Cavalcanti, who wrote the original story as well, intended as realism, is regarded by his critics as unjustified gloom and futility. Above all, he has been reproached for using an idiom that belongs to the 1930s.

There is truth, I believe, in both praise and criticism. Cavalcanti himself described the picture as a Brazilian *En Rade*, for its theme, like his French film's, is the desire to escape. But having seen *O Canto do Mar* while in Brazil, in the atmosphere which inspired it, I feel it would be misleading to dwell on comparisons. Cavalcanti was as much concerned with the folklore and superstitions typical of Pernambuco in the tropical north, where the film was made, as with its dominant theme. Indeed, for the peasant suffering from the periodical droughts in this region, escape may be a practical need as much as a dream. And he responds to the “call of the sea” if a ship is southward bound, sailing towards cooler and more fertile lands.

Thus Cavalcanti's story of the conflict between a woman, in whose life escape has led to tragedy, and her son and daughter, for whom it is the key to happiness, shows some profoundly characteristic local traditions. There is the homely ceremonial when a child dies and the neighbours bring lamps “to illumine his after-life”; the primitive Xangu rites to exorcise sickness; and among the marvellous dances there is a Freva, performed with parasols, perhaps the gayest of all Brazilian dances.

Many of the images have a sombre, poetic symbolism, notably those of the mother and of the sphere under her vindictive and negative rule. Her part, and her son's, develop excitingly and are well played. On the other hand, dramatic interest is unevenly sustained and some of the other acting is less good; and it is true that *O Canto do Mar* is memorable chiefly for separate moments of poetic vision, for some brilliant folklore sequences, and for its beautiful imagery.

A scene from “*Children of Hiroshima*,” directed by Kaneto Shindo, the dramatic Japanese film about the effects of the A-Bomb on the inhabitants of the city.





Cyd Charisse and Gene Kelly in Minnelli's CinemaScope version of "Brigadoon." "When the screen is filled with people or landscape the extra space is valuable, but there are long stretches when it can only be irrelevant."

THE BIG SCREENS

Richard Kohler

We have received more unsolicited manuscripts on CinemaScope and the wide screen movement than on any other subject, and all have expressed, in varying degrees, distrust and dislike. Most of the articles, of course, had points in common. We decided that the case could best be presented by two views from different standpoints: the theorist's, with an analysis of aesthetic objections, and the technician's, with a statement of practical misgivings.

HOLLYWOOD is currently using its vast publicity mechanism to convince a bewildered public that physical realism is not only bigger but better than interpretative art. Unless the present trend is wisely deflected, æsthetic rights gained in a half-century of struggle will be cut, literally, into long narrow ribbons, with the public cajoled into applauding the butchery.

The trend itself has not been surprising. Polaroid glasses were more tangible items for industrial production than evidence of artistic taste; width of screen has been more easily evolved than breadth of mind or depth of spirit. Producers have followed, and perhaps justifiably, a line of least resistance leading directly to the box-office. This radical change in form, however, is resulting in an equally violent change in content.

Five principal processes have been introduced:

3-D: the now familiar stereoscopic system combining polaroid glasses and dual projection.

Cinerama: a curved screen encompassing nearly the entire field of peripheral vision, employing three separate projectors.

CinemaScope: employing an anamorphic lens and a curved screen with a coefficient of 2.55.

VistaVision: a variable system with the emphasis on a screen with the coefficient of 1.85.

Todd A-O: using 65 mm. film and a screen approaching Cinerama proportions.

In addition to these, of course, there are the various

wide screens that overthrow the established coefficient of 1.33 by extensions that range, according to the whims of different companies, from 1.66 to 2.

The illusion of "actual" reality has been proclaimed as the very-wide-screen's chief excuse for existence. Cinerama is of such size and scope that the viewer, unable clearly to perceive any "frame of reference," feels physically present at the scene. CinemaScope and other new processes produce similar impressions, but without the same degree of enveloping impact.

To some extent they all place the spectator in an environment and create a feeling of participation. Since he is located in a position roughly corresponding to that of the camera, the spectator moves when the camera moves. He flies in the aircraft, is carried along on the roller coaster. When the camera is stationary, the surrounding scene takes on an appearance of "actual" reality.

This is, of course, as a mechanical device very striking; but in total conflict with that purely imaginative transportation which has been called "a suspension of disbelief constituting poetic faith." By assaulting the spectator on the "actual" plane of consciousness, the enveloping screen in fact makes him physically too much a part of the scene. Dramatic art, after all, is a medium designed for emotional and intellectual response; and empathy, the fundamental experience it offers, surely demands that one

first lose one's physical self-consciousness. Only then does one become imaginatively free, carried away on a magic carpet of forgetfulness of self.

Conversely, when a director is allowed to use his medium properly, he selects concise images, juxtaposes them in meaningful combinations, and brings them to his audience as *representations* of reality—not as the thing itself. His aim is to bring us to a psychological communion, not to induce the state of physical wonderment that, at its most extreme, was expressed by Mr. Darryl Zanuck after seeing a day's rushes from *How to Marry a Millionaire*: "Here was Lauren Bacall on a couch—she filled the screen! *She was 64 feet long and in colour!*" (*Life*, July 20, 1953.)

In other words, Mr. Zanuck was all too plainly unconcerned to maintain that "aesthetic distance" vital to all art. Too close, too physically preoccupied, we become merely distracted by an over-obtrusive surface. And it is precisely at this kind of distraction (or substitution) that the new movement of physical realism on huge screens is aiming.

II

As the frame of reference becomes less apparent, the image takes a greater physical grip on the audience, the extent of this grip depending also on the nature and amount of camera movement and on the type of scene photographed. If the camera is motionless, so is the spectator; if the scene is a reproduction of a work from another medium, such as the extracts from *Aida* shown on Cinerama, then the viewer is only transferred from one kind of theatrical environment to another, the stage proscenium becomes the frame of reference, and there is no interference with the aesthetic distance created by the *other* medium. It goes without saying that nearly all the interpretative characteristics of the cinema are sacrificed, and the camera becomes only a photographic adjunct to a

stage director's creation.

On the other hand, as the scope of the screen is reduced and the frame becomes *more* apparent, the opportunity for imaginative interpretation increases. The camera can be moved without wrenching the spectator; smaller details can be selected and emphasised; the whole observation of a scene becomes more varied because more flexible. The spectator becomes less a being encompassed physically by an environment and more an omnipresent observer.

There are as many degrees of awareness of a frame as there are possible sizes and shapes for screens. The CinemaScope frame, situated as it is about midway in size between the "total" and the "normal" screen, produces a kind of synthesised compromise. There is some filmic quality creating its special brand of communion; some feeling of physical reality which interferes with communion but can supply a distinct thrill of its own; a theatrical style which smacks of stage reproduction; and some digressive scenic display. There is, in fact, an aggregation of features, but there cannot be a unification of elements.

Many CinemaScope productions have been and will be praised as filmically excellent, as demonstrating an ability to do what the more concise screen of the past could do. The directors of these films have used their process well, they have compromised well, but in the highest sense their product isn't *filmic*. Too much has, inevitably, been sacrificed. For every scenic effect that succeeds, there are many narrative or dialogue sequences that fail. Rightly, fear of the physical effect of too much movement—from the camera, or in the editing—slackens or clogs the rhythm; when the screen is filled with people or landscape the extra space is valuable, but there are long stretches when it can only be irrelevant. And so on. As a whole, in these CinemaScope productions, the content—story, actors, *mise en scène*—has been good in spite of the screen,



'The figures are generally placed at some distance and in groups; they become subjects of collective width.' Fred MacMurray, Lauren Bacall, Clifton Webb, Cornel Wilde, June Allyson, Van Heflin grouped for CinemaScope in "A Woman's World."

not because of it. A diamond in a brass setting is a diamond all the same.

III

This is perhaps the best point at which to consider the stereoscopic and the stereophonic. The illusion of depth created by stereoscopic projection is quite suitable for showing form in correct perspective. It does not, however, especially benefit story perspectives. Once the viewer becomes absorbed in a story, suspending his disbelief to the point of communion, he loses consciousness of physical depth. When he realises the difference in perspective constituting depth, he is distracted from psychological impressions by a purely visual reaction.

The idea, the dramatic point, which an image in a film may suggest, gains little in impact by adding a dimension automatically assumed by the viewer. The *concept* of a tree, as distinguished from the *percept*, can be communicated as well or better without the third dimension as with it.

Stereophonic sound is another attempt to put the spectator physically into the scene. The use of loudspeakers placed on both sides and to the rear of an audience gives the impression that subjects (or objects) making specific sounds are in correspondingly surrounding locations. This disconcerts, because the perspective created on a distant and localised screen must, of necessity, be different. The roar of an aeroplane engine coming from the wall to the spectator's side is most distracting when a close shot of the pilot's cabin occupies the screen, and the wing and motor are presumed to be immediately offscreen some 100 feet from the viewer's seat. It is an attempt to create encompassing sound—front, sides, and rear—without an equally encompassing screen. Except for novelty effect, a multiple-source sound system requires an equally surrounding multiple-source visual system.

The more we desert a single, concise source for image and related sound, and turn to a physical imitation of

reality with its corresponding spread of sight and sound, the more we restrict ourselves in the handling of our material and the less effective—except on the purely “stunt” level—it becomes.

IV

Granted that the frame of reference is an essential structure in the cinema as an interpretative and imaginative art, and that as the effect of physical reality increases the effect of psychological communion decreases, how does the size and shape of the frame enhance or impair the selection and composition of material?

Films can communicate both the appearances of things and the ideas which those appearances suggest. In scenic description, the primary concern is with form and colour, the appearances of things shown for their sensuous value. In the communication of ideas, the main emphasis is on what the appearances suggest rather than the appearances themselves. So a frame appropriate to one form of communication may not necessarily be appropriate to another; but the shape of the screen has, inevitably, been determined by the average content. A very wide horizontal screen emphasises scenic display, but can be of little use in suggesting ideas or the course of human relationships. It is obvious, in fact, that for communicating ideas a selective frame, not an all-embracing and unrestrictive one, is best; only then can images be composed in a pertinent and meaningful way.

The director simply wants a frame that does not ask too much or give too little. Any unusual dimension, such as excessive width or height, is an advance commitment which automatically restricts the choice of subject or creates awkward compositional problems. If, for example, the director selects a vertical subject and his frame is extremely wide, he must fill in the excess area with material or space that is often distractingly factitious. The frame applicable to most film material is an *uncommitted* frame, and deliberately to employ a vast horizontal



More subjects of collective width. Edmund Purdom, Victor Mature, Michael Wilding, Judith Evelyn, Gene Tierney in "The Egyptian."



Vertical subjects horizontally grouped for a 2-shot. 'The director . . . must fill in the excess area with material or space that is often distractingly factitious.' Howard Keel and Jane Powell in "Seven Brides for Seven Brothers."

one for interpretative work of which the primary subject is man, a vertical figure, seems plainly foolhardy.

On a CinemaScope screen the director is obliged to compose his scenes in a stage-like manner. The figures are generally placed at some distance and in groups; they become subjects of collective width. This is effective in the same way as a stage is effective, and such a recording may be as good as its content. If a producer wants to record scenes in a stage-like manner, all well and good; but if he wants to fulfil the special characteristics of his medium, his screen must be of balanced dimensions and concise size.

The ideal frame for the interpretative film is one which avoids the static square; acknowledges, moderately, that the earth's surface is horizontal; is without unusual width or height; and respects the normal oval field of vision. Thus, dynamic in shape, it is capable of exhibiting supplementary scenery, not strongly committed in any direction, and normal to view. Graphic artists have traditionally preferred a rectangle with a coefficient of 1.6, "the golden mean." Edison selected 1.33 for his screen, and this frame has, until recently, been in almost universal use.

For most subject matter, then, almost any aspect ratio from 1.33:1 to 1.85:1, or even 2:1, would seem to fit the above requirements. (The VistaVision process offers a variable system covering these ratios and emphasising the 1.85 coefficient.) Beyond this, the wider the screen, the narrower the interpretative path the artist must follow.

V

The unusual shapes of the new screens compel an excessive increase in size. If we extend the width of the screen, we cannot maintain a constant area by proportionately reducing the height. We must instead retain at least equal height, and thus increase total size. The resulting screen hampers artistic discretion. If our screen is too large, it will be impossible to focus on some subjects; therefore, impossible to *select* some subjects. For example, a close-up of an actor's eyes could only be used

for shock effect.

When the subject display is too large the eye cannot combine the elements into a whole. The larger the magnification, the more the viewer is forced to concentrate on only one part at a time, which either destroys communication outright or means that viewing time must be extended, and cutting slowed. In which case, of course, pace is retarded; and when stage technique replaces film technique, theatrical pace must be substituted for filmic pace.

The screen, then, should be sufficiently conservative in shape to permit a satisfactory compromise in size. But why not vary size and shape to fit each situation as it comes along? Why not use a selective frame when it is needed, then open it up for spectacular sequences?

It seems self-evident that, unless and until an audience could come to accept such variations within a single work as a matter of course, any noticeable change in the frame of reference would be seriously distracting. Could not the alteration, then, be concealed in some way? There are only two conceivable methods and both are unsatisfactory. Either the frame must be very gradually modified, which only offers a lengthy opportunity for distraction as a substitute for sudden shock, or the contrast at the border must be reduced. This creates a less emphatic and therefore more flexible frame, but at the same time precludes having a high contrast frame at all.

A high contrast frame produces the effect of looking through a mask into an area beyond. It gives the impression that the subject continues off-camera into the area hidden by the mask. When a low contrast frame is used, creating a grey or indefinite border, the "area beyond" is brought forward and blended into the mask. Where the image is, and where it is not, is left undecided; the result is continuous distraction. The sharp illusion of photographed reality becomes just flickering shadows on a white screen, and consciousness of technique destroys belief.

Ideally, one must accept the need for a constant and unchanging frame during the course of a single work.

VI

The new processes are not merely variations on an old medium; they are new mediums for entertainment. So long as each presents something which is considered valuable by an audience large enough to support it, each medium will be successful. Just how good—and, ultimately, how profitable—that something will be, depends on the limiting characteristics of each medium.

Each process has a special contribution to make, whether it be interpretative art, scenic display, illusion of physical reality, reproduction of work from other mediums, or some sort of synthesis of these elements. Producers should be criticised not for using mediums perhaps economically essential, but for failing to be true to the peculiar characteristics of each process; and this includes the pre-CinemaScope film, which would not have been so ruthlessly jettisoned if it had been, in general, more imaginatively used.

Of course, in the early days of the new processes, there will be sacrifices of over-all unity, coherence, and proportion for the sake of briefly effective fragments. And this because the majority of audiences do not, as yet, perceive the difference. They may feel the effect, but they do not fully understand the cause. A characteristic of undeveloped taste is a capacity for being satisfied by effective parts at the expense of the whole. It is, perhaps, natural to be satisfied with crumbs if one has never tasted a whole cake.

All the same, just before the advent of the extended image, the sheer weight of incessant mediocrity had begun to force a demand for higher quality. Since the industry was unprepared for such a fundamental challenge, the novelty of the television screen easily siphoned audiences out of the cinemas. The novelty of the wide screen has begun to lure them back.

But the novel has a way of becoming just the usual. (It did not take long for 3-D to lose its appeal.) The public will begin to get only a certain degree of satisfaction out of the merely scenic; they will tire of physical reality; they will recognise reproduction as, after all, just a recording of the original; they will become aware that a synthesis is often synthetic. They will ultimately renew their demand that the artist of the cinema interpret; and, when that time comes, he will need tools of selection and emphasis suited to his medium.

Describing the ideal art structure, Pope used surprisingly appropriate terms:

"No single parts unequally surprise,
All comes united to the admiring eyes;
No monstrous height, or breadth, or length appears,
The Whole at once is bold and regular."



The 35 mm. frame:
a reminder

THE BIG SCREENS (2)

Walter Lassally

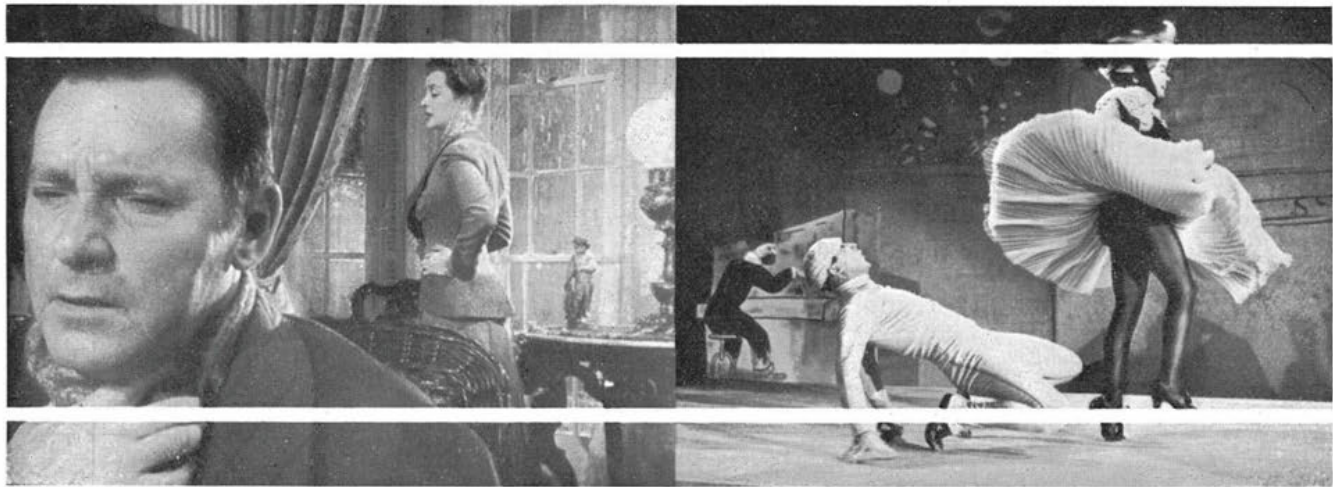
I ADD my own comment on the new dimensions in the film industry simply because, as an ardent filmgoer and practising film technician, I *like* the old format and hate to see it being steamrollered to death in the name of progress. Today, with the emphasis on novelty, noise and spectacle, the cinema is on its way to returning to its birthplace, the fairground; and the ostensible motive for this is to draw audiences away from their TV screens at home by offering something that TV cannot provide. In the autumn of 1952, the Cinerama programme and the independently produced 3-D feature, *Bwana Devil*, opened in New York, and while neither of these two enterprises was part of an organised plan to solve Hollywood's problems, their great commercial success led to the initiation of one by all the major studios. Current productions were halted and reshot in 3-D, work was begun on various imitations of Cinerama making use of the anamorphic lens. So, out of these two isolated enterprises, a movement began that within a year was threatening to oust, perhaps for good, a screen format that had been standard throughout the world since the beginnings of cinema.

In its haste, Hollywood actually killed one of the geese that was laying golden eggs. By rushing into production of 3-D films using antiquated, rapidly adapted and often unsuitable equipment, they soon alienated the public. The other goose, however, was more sensibly treated. Cinerama being too expensive and complicated for general use, CinemaScope was developed from Henri Chrétien's 25-year-old process which, maintaining the huge curved screen (somewhat reduced in height) but condensing Cinerama's three films into one, could be more readily fitted into the structure of existing movie theatres in the U.S.A.

This latter factor also gave birth to the "wide screen"; for, while the general demand was just for the greater size with which TV could not compete, structural factors in the cinemas, particularly overhanging balconies, restricted expansion in height far more than in width. Thus the total screen area could only be increased by a sacrifice of height. It is interesting to note that the new screen proportions were adopted entirely without reference to the production side of the industry.

II

The development from Cinerama towards CinemaScope and the wide screen is remarkable for its lack of logic. Cinerama, while very successful on its own ground, is not suited to becoming a story-telling medium; it is clearly too enormous, too unwieldy, for that. The Cinerama screen, however, deeply concave and even containing the first few rows of the audience within its extremities, serves to engulf the spectator and so involve him personally in the action, while the CinemaScope screen is usually confined to the stage and is only nominally curved. This can still be effective in very large theatres, but serves



These two stills were taken from the frames of, respectively, "The Little Foxes" and "An American in Paris," films shot in the aspect ratio of 1.33 : 1. The horizontal white lines show how much of each image is cut off when films shot for this ratio are projected on the wide screen. The wide screen ratio assumed here is 1.85 : 1, and the lines suggest how much is lost by the most tactful framing a projectionist might manage.

no purpose in smaller ones, especially when they are long and narrow, and certainly make focusing more difficult. The height of absurdity is reached in some London news theatres, seating about 200, where the "new wide screen" is (perforce) hardly larger than its predecessor, but remains distinctly curved.

Technically, too, Cinerama's unnatural children have not kept up with their more reasonable parent. At least Cinerama makes use of three films, each with frames $1\frac{1}{2}$ times ordinary size, to fill its enormous screen. In many CinemaScope installations, the screen area to be covered is practically equivalent, but one film, with frames no larger than the old ones, has to do the work of all three. So, on the one hand, the nearer one sits to the CinemaScope screen, the nearer it comes to fulfilling the requirement of engulfing the spectator's field of vision; on the other hand, owing to the huge enlargement involved, one should really be seated farther away from the screen than formerly, to obtain a comparably sharp, grain-free image. In fact, rear stalls are now centre stalls, centre stalls front stalls, and front stalls up on the stage. And, of course, in all the new systems except Cinerama, the image passing through the projector is still of the old dimensions, about the size of an English postage stamp.

And this is not all. The hastily chosen aspect ratio of CinemaScope (2.55:1) has involved a quite unnecessary sacrifice of height. In fact, only 13.5 per cent of all cinemas in Britain can install CinemaScope without having to *reduce* their present screen height. (Unless they put the screen in front of the proscenium arch, thus sacrificing a number of seats.)

III

The cinemas most in need of a box-office fillip, the smaller and independent halls, are in fact least able to benefit from the new systems. The equipment is costly, and in smaller cinemas a wide screen or even CinemaScope is not effective enough to guarantee a steadily maintained rise in receipts, especially in the face of competition from larger cinemas which can show off the new systems to better advantage. One wonders, indeed, if some of the smaller cinemas might not increase their receipts by a swing in the opposite direction: maintaining the old format and showing more intelligent, "off-beat"

pictures, including continental ones. One critic has already remarked that "the most efficient revolution might be just a notable improvement in the quality of 2-D films." At any rate, the present situation is bound to split the industry to some extent into circus and cinema, with main emphasis on the former. A proportion of cinemas is bound to exploit the present fashion for size and spectacle so long as the box-office justifies it.

All the same, is it not conceivable that in many remaining cinemas the public, given the chance, would be happy to accept the old screen size, provided the films were good? The question is an important one from many points of view, for the case for the retention of the old format is formidable:—

1. It is the format of every camera and projector gate in the world; simply not to utilise part of the available frame area (the present practice) can hardly be accepted as a permanent solution, particularly with the great increase in magnification of the image.

2. It is the format for which a considerable proportion of the world's film industries is continuing to produce films. At present there are no indications of a major switch to new formats in any country other than Britain and America. Cinemas in Europe, incidentally, are in general smaller than ours, and fewer of them have overhanging balconies.

3. Subtitled films can only be shown with difficulty, and at much greater loss to the image, on a wide screen.

4. It is the format for both TV and 16 mm. non-commercial films, once again complete with a full range of equipment throughout the world. Abandoning this format in the commercial studios would mean the creation of double, perhaps triple, standards, with consequently interminable problems of conversion and adaptation.

5. Last, and by no means least, it has proved to be the best format for composition in the film medium, being an acceptable compromise frame midway between the horizontal and the vertical.

IV

Rather, maybe, than have their objections dismissed as standing in the way of mechanical progress, technicians in this country seem to have been generally ready to accept the new dimensions, and few seem to have

bothered to ask the familiar movie question: "Which way did they go?" It may be that the problems here are less confusing than in Hollywood, since the Rank Organisation has decided in favour of VistaVision (with its more reasonable proportion of not more than 1.85:1 and its improved picture definition deriving from a larger camera negative), as against CinemaScope. But, nevertheless, they exist.

Of course it is "easy" to shoot for the new shape, or even for old and new together; you just draw two horizontal lines across your viewfinder and make sure that "essential action," as they term it, is kept within this area. Only, you should never again use the word "compose." In order to compose a picture, you need a set frame. The new frames are liable to be anywhere between 1.66:1 and 2:1 until some kind of standardisation (of which there is yet no sign) is reached. Also, even assuming a set frame of, say, 1.85:1, the limitations are considerable. While the wider shape may be well suited to landscapes and long shots, it becomes increasingly more awkward as the camera approaches its subject. The framing of medium shots and close-ups tends to be more monotonous as less differentiation between levels is possible, and more difficult as height differences are accentuated. It becomes continually necessary to "build up" actors and objects to minimise this effect, which means to place tables and chairs on blocks and short actresses on telephone books for the sake of natural appearance within the narrower limits of height available. Often, too, one has to "set up" the shot farther away from the action in order to include the required height, thus reducing concentration and dramatic tension.

In CinemaScope, of course, this can be accentuated to the point of absurdity. One consideration which must surely have led to the filming of so many subjects set in ancient Rome or Egypt is the popularity in those days of the low couch for reclining upon. There must be more reclining done in CinemaScope films than in the whole

previous history of the cinema, and no wonder—for who can stand up while anyone else is sitting down, except in long shot?

V

From a production point of view, the new shapes score only if the entire future output of the industry is to be concentrated on spectacle, landscapes and long shots. The fact that other subjects have been filmed in CinemaScope only emphasises the truth of this. (Here, perhaps, the cutting problem is most accentuated. The speed of cutting—with its attendant advantages of timing and selection—of course depends on the time necessary for the spectator to absorb all the "information" contained in any one shot, and the larger the screen area, the longer that time will be.) CinemaScope loses that essential universality of the frame. How great the increase in flexibility allowed by VistaVision remains to be seen, and the outcome of the inevitable commercial rivalry between the two systems has, anyway, yet to be decided.

Meanwhile, a concentrated effort ought to be made—via letters to the Press and protests to cinema managers—against the insupportable process of showings on the wide screens of films not shot for them. We are all by now only too familiar with the resulting scalplings and amputations. In France this habit was, in most places, stopped after critics voiced a loud protest. Is it too much to expect a similar service from our own critics? One sees a sad sign of the times in the fact that some cinema managers prefer to give what is, obviously, a bad and quite unshowmanlike performance rather than risk appearing to be behind the times *vis-à-vis* an apathetic public.

In the long run, of course, it is only the public that can decide—simply by tiring of the new fashions rather than making some coherent form of protest. The development of the new systems has been remarkable for its rapidity, lack of logic and disregard of long-term consequences. Against the power of invested capital, only the box-office can be a strong enough voice.

The Seventh Art

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"PHANTOM OF THE
OPERA"
2. Veronica Lake—In
"I MARRIED A WITCH"
3. Bowery Boys
"GHOST CHASERS"
4. Bela Lugosi—In
"THE CORPSE
VANISHES"
5. Action-Horror-Western
"PHANTOM STAGE"
6. Boris Karloff—In
"FRANKENSTEIN"
7. "BELA LUGOSI MEETS
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Dr. Cooper believes that Hollywood dogs, like animals everywhere, manifest their neuroses chiefly in a physical way. . . . "I notice, for instance, that when Hollywood writers are unemployed for a while and get to the hysteria stage, their dogs will often start vomiting in the morning like their owners. But as soon as a writer gets a good assignment, the problem always straightens itself out. . . ." Last week Cinemactress Crawford described life with her six-year-old dog Cliquot, a Harjes poodle. Cliquot, she says, was always happy when she was at the glamorous studios, like M-G-M and Warner Bros. But at Republic Pictures, a horse-opera factory, Cliquot was sad. "He chewed up a carpet," said Joan.—*Time Magazine*.

★

Variety is the spice of [Geoffrey] Keen's screen life. He hardly ever plays the same part twice.—*Film News from the J. Arthur Rank Organisation*.

★

In [Edmond] O'Brien's considered opinion, the amount of mayhem he deals out in *Shield for Murder* sets a new high even for him. He gets off on the right foot in the picture's opening scene by luring a bookmaker into a dark alley and shooting him neatly in the back. Later on the pace quickens and, among other rough stuff, he kills a deaf mute and throws his body down a flight of stairs, with a pistol batters a pair of tough guys into unconsciousness, slaps the girl he loves to the floor, and as a grand climax takes on half the police force in a blazing gun battle.—*United Artists News*.

THE LAST SEQUENCE OF

On The Waterfront

Lindsay Anderson



The last sequence of "On the Waterfront". Marlon Brando

FIRST, and specifically, the data. Terry Malloy, the sensitive bruiser who is the principal character of the film, has given evidence against Johnny Friendly, the crooked Union Boss. As a result he has found himself cold-shouldered by his mates. But he has regained his pride. "I ain't a bum," he tells his girl. "I'm just going down there, and get my rights." The last sequence of *On the Waterfront* is as follows:—

The dockers are on the quay, waiting for the call to work. When Terry arrives, they ignore him. There is work for them all—except him. Left alone there, he turns and makes for the hut that is Friendly's dockside headquarters. At an interval, the dockers follow him.

Terry strides down the gangway between the hut and the quayside, and shouts a challenge to Friendly. (The dockers line the quay, looking silently down on the hut.) Friendly comes out with a bunch of his thugs. "You're nothing!" shouts Terry. "I was ratting on myself all those years and I didn't know it. I'm glad what I done!" Friendly challenges him to fight. Terry accepts; and he and Friendly set to on the raft. The dockers watch.

Friendly gets the worst of the fight; he calls in his men to deal with Terry. They start to beat him up. The dockers move tentatively to his assistance, but are halted by two of Friendly's men at the bottom of the gangway. They turn away, cowed.

The dockers are starting to move away when Father Barry arrives with Edie, Terry's girl. Terry is now stretched out still on the planks; Friendly and his men march up the gangway. "The little rat's yours," he shouts. The work whistle blows. The dockers turn their backs on Friendly. One of them says: "How about Terry? He don't work, we don't work. . . ." Friendly lays hands on an old workman, who shakes himself free with a shove. Friendly overbalances into the water. The dockers cheer.

Father Barry and Edie are with Terry; he is bruised and bleeding and all but unconscious. One of the dockers runs up. "If Terry walks in, we walk with him." Father Barry turns to Terry: "You hear that, Terry?" Terry nods dazedly. The priest continues: "You lost the battle, but you have a chance to win the war." Terry mumbles; the priest hauls him to his feet. "Finish what you started. . . . You can—you can!"

With a terrible effort Terry summons his strength to

stand and walk alone. Someone stretches out a helping hand. The priest shouts: "Take your hands off him! Leave him alone! Leave him alone!" Terry lurches through the crowd of dockers, followed by the priest, still warding off any helping hands. Terry staggers on towards the shed, his face bloody and agonised, his feet dragging through the dust. The dockers stand and watch as he passes them. The overseer stands in the doorway of the shed.

Terry gets to the doorway; he totters but remains on his feet. The overseer regards him impassively, then shouts: "All to work." The dockers stream forward into the shed; Terry vanishes with them. The priest and the girl stand together, smiling. Friendly appears among the dockers; they stream past, heedless of him. As they pass into the dark shed, the iron door starts to descend. The priest and the girl continue to smile. The workmen have all vanished into the darkness; the iron door closes behind them. *The End.*

II

Suppose now that we were presented with this curious sequence in isolation, divorced from the film of which it forms the climax. What would we legitimately conclude its attitude and its import to be? First of all we would presume, I think, that on a superficial level at least, the episode is intended to present some sort of conflict between a good and a bad. Terry Malloy is obviously "better" than Johnny Friendly—the film, that is to say, is "on his side." Certainly he is more courageous, since he fights his battle himself; and the ordeal of his final, unaided walk reveals a capacity for physical endurance of no mean order. And in some vague way, there is a suggestion that this ordeal is undertaken by him for a principle, selflessly.

On closer examination, however, the principle proves difficult to define. Terry is an individualist; his opposition to Friendly is personal; his concern is with himself. "I was ratting *on myself* all those years." Why then the ordeal? A desire to gain leadership through an impressive display of strength? Or, more charitably, perhaps merely because he is persuasively urged into it by someone whose opinion he respects, little as he himself may understand

its necessity.

For the truth is that this agonised pilgrimage down the quay is pointless. The mob has been discredited; Friendly's hold is broken; the dockers have it in their power to be their own masters. Yet, instead of rising to the occasion, they turn like leaderless sheep in search of a new master. "If Terry walks in, we walk in with him." If there is any principle expounded here, it is surely not that of Democracy. Men collectively—"the people"—are shown as incapable of either self-government or mutual aid. The dockers are craven: at first they shun the man who has delivered their enemy to justice; they follow him tentatively; they look on passively while he takes a beating. Even Friendly's ignominy is half-accidental; he over-balances into the water. And when their oppressor is vanquished, the dockers apparently find themselves lost. To whom are they to turn? To the new strong man, bruised and bleeding though he may be. First, though, he must perform a ritual demonstration of superiority. "If Terry walks in. . . ."

The conception of this sequence seems to me implicitly (if unconsciously) Fascist; the impression is further emphasised by the behaviour of the Catholic priest and of the girl. If one were considering the events, and the behaviour of the participants, realistically, one might be tempted to suppose that in Father Barry the film is concerned to present a particular, rather hysterical priest with a taste for engineering vulgar theatrical effects in real life. (Karl Malden's playing of the role provides convincing support for this impression.) Plainly, though, the intention is not realistic but symbolic. "Leave him alone! Take your hands off him!" Such good Samaritans as there may be in the crowd (and we do not see many) get short shrift from Father Barry; and the blessing of the Christian Church is invoked on Terry's suffering. The girl is used to perform an equivalent function. For all her fragile appearance, there is the spirit of a Spartan mother within the breast of Edie; seeing her lover disappear, battered almost out of recognition and hardly able to stand, to perform a day's labour in the dockyard—she smiles contentedly.

With the climax, the social moral seems to become almost overt. In the doorway of the shed stands the overseer; Terry lurches to a stop before him. Authority, well dressed, paunchy, complacently in control, confronts its weary, pain-racked subject. It opens its mouth, to shout an order: "All to work!" In this relationship, we can only suppose, the ordinary human impulses of generosity and compassion are irrelevant. To pity sheep on their way to the slaughter-house would be the merest simple-minded sentimentalism. It is with this charitable thought that the film comes to an end. The dockers stream out of the daylight into the dark. The priest and the girl smile. The last image, powerful and grim, is of the iron portcullis, descending to shut the workers away in a shadowy and remote world of toil.

Whether intentional or not, the symbolism is unmistakable. There is, it is true, a shot of Friendly, vainly trying to assert his authority again, jostled aside by the dockers as they move forward to work; but there is not much that is positive in the image; it is almost an aside. Nothing expresses a sense of liberation. The impact is made by Terry's battered face, the overseer, the priest and the girl, the expressionless dockers, the portcullis.

. . . It is a conclusion that can only be taken in two ways: as hopeless, savagely ironic; or as fundamentally contemptuous, pretending to idealism, but in reality without either grace, or joy, or love.

III

It has been remarked that the success this year of three films like *From Here to Eternity*, *The Caine Mutiny* and *On the Waterfront* is a hopeful sign, demonstrating that inflationary techniques are not essential to the seduction of mass audiences. All we need are good films. It is true that these films share the negative merit of not being in CinemaScope; but in view of the basic corruption of each of them, it is depressing to find that they represent so many people's idea of a "good film." *On the Waterfront* is a bad film. Unfortunately, bad films are important too. This one is important because of its special kind of badness, and because of the enormous degree of acceptance it has won.

It has first of all been accepted commercially; turn up any trade paper of the last few months, and you will be sure to find a paragraph somewhere rejoicing at its triumphant progress from the West End round the country. Even more remarkable has been its acceptance by the intelligentsia generally, and by the critics in particular. In November it was easily the favourite selection in the Film Institute's publication *Critics' Choice*. For once the panel seemed unanimous. "On the Waterfront is good, very good." "A haunting film, superbly made . . . grey with pity and terror, it contrives to put in a word for the indestructibility of the human soul . . . the film grinds with the majestic inevitability of a Beethoven symphony to a final chord of hope." Nor were William Whitebait, Paul Dehn and Fred Majdalany alone in their enthusiasm. *The Financial Times* noted that "neither the anger nor the indignation has a trace of insincerity." *The Times* called it "a grim film which pulls no punches and makes no concessions," and even *Tribune*, where one might have expected some awareness of the social issues involved, found itself carried away: "His slow-burning soul breaking into intense but short-lived flame, Marlon Brando—it could be no one but the superb Marlon Brando—is on the screen again."

The film, in fact, has been accepted at its face value; or, more correctly perhaps, at its *sensation* value—as if it were a strong drink or an electric shock—and liked to a greater or lesser degree, according to individual taste. Here and there objections are made that the last sequence is "theatrical" or "melodramatic"; but this is mentioned as a regrettable blot, not as a possible indication of intentions and motives which may have been present all along, though less obvious at first sight.

Yet a preliminary title to the film is quite specific in its claims. The story will show how "self-appointed tyrants can be defeated by right-thinking people in a vital democracy." We are entitled, even invited, then, to examine closely the social implications of what we are shown.

The first thing revealed is the virtual absence of at least half the elements necessary to make the situation convincing. A social problem of this kind needs to be placed in a context, shown with a certain fullness, in the round. Rackets like Johnny Friendly's do not spring up out of the ground; they are not the productions of one wicked man. We know that the story of *On the Water-*

front is taken from actuality; yet, as it reaches the screen, the drama is played out in a vacuum. The locations are real, yet the action which takes place on them is as isolated from life as though it were all happening on a succession of stage sets. We are expected to accept Friendly's position and his domination over the waterfront through the agency of (apparently) half a dozen picturesque thugs. The means by which he has achieved his power—through negotiations with shipowners, on the one hand, through exploiting the dockers' fear of unemployment, on the other—are not clearly shown. Only two episodes hint at the extent of corruption: the very skimmed scene at the inquiry (where the emphasis is almost entirely on the personal conflict between Friendly and Terry), and the single shot of one of Friendly's highly placed sponsors watching the proceedings at a television set. This last incident is so elliptically presented, anyway, that one doubts whether most audiences will grasp its meaning. What, meanwhile, of the police? Our sole contact with these is through the two avuncular plainclothes-men who try to persuade Terry to give evidence. And, most significantly, the principle of concerted action (i.e., Unionism) is referred to once or twice, but all the emphasis is on the individual gesture. As we have seen, the film's climax evades, or rather perverts, this essential issue.

To such criticism it may be objected that the makers of *On the Waterfront* have purposely chosen to dramatise the problem through one particular case: the moral awakening of Terry Malloy. There is nothing to be said against such an approach, so long as its limits are clearly defined. The vital question then arises: what exactly does Terry awake to? Over her first beer-and-chaser, Edie is not slow to remind him that no man is an island; but after this promising start, the subject is dropped. Terry finds his dignity—that is to say, he develops a capacity for individual action; but what he does, he does for himself, to avenge his brother's murder, and for the *beaux yeux* of Edie. All of which has little relevance to the duties of "right-thinking people in a vital democracy." In fact, *On the Waterfront* is essentially an extremely artful conjuring trick; underneath its brilliant technical surface, essential conclusions are evaded and replaced by a personal drama whose implications are entirely different. Put another way, one might say that the potency of Marlon Brando—physical, emotional and dramatic—is effectively employed to palm off a number of political assertions, all of them spurious and many of them pernicious.

The dishonesty of method becomes clear when we compare *On the Waterfront* with one of America's really great social films. *The Grapes of Wrath* provided its adaptors with a similarly radical subject, where a general social (or political) problem is approached through the sufferings of a handful of selected individuals. Also, as a film *The Grapes of Wrath* owes its greatness to its affirmation of human dignity (as *On the Waterfront* seeks to do), rather than to any factual indictment of the society in which its disasters take place. But it does this without evasions. The background is there; the corruption in the police; the economic pressure which forces the Joads into their hopeless Odyssey; the inhumanity of ordinary man to man, and his humanity too. When Tom Joad awakes, it is to the slow realisation that individuality is somehow not



Henry Fonda in "The Grapes of Wrath," 'While Ford's images of human dignity have faith in them to make them true . . .'

enough; that perhaps all men are his brothers. It is no disparagement of Brando to say that he fails where Fonda succeeds, for Brando too is an actor of rare poetic power. In spite of an over-free indulgence of his genius for naturalistic mannerism (and here one suspects the misleading influence of his director), the enormous passionate honesty he puts into Terry Malloy, his beautiful sensitivity, shines out like truth itself in all this falsity. At times it almost seems as if he is going to save

'Kazan's lip-service reduces all aspiration to a platitude.' Jeanne Crain, with Ethel Waters, in "Pinky."



the picture. But no actor can give a film poetic validity on his own; and while Ford's images of human dignity have faith in them to make them true, Kazan's ingenious lip-service reduces all aspiration to a platitude.

IV

An article in the last issue of *SIGHT AND SOUND*, *The Metteur-en-Scène*, raised some questions which relate interestingly to this one, of Kazan and *On the Waterfront*, and the currently fashionable estimate of each. But Tony Richardson seems to me to have blurred his argument by basing it on a most dubious theoretical premise. He categorises directors according to the relationship he discovers between them and their subjects—those who “dominate” their material; those who “translate” without “transforming” it; and a third group, the *metteurs en scène*, who work in a somewhat shadowy no-man's-land between these two extremes. This does not seem very helpful as a basis for analysis; particularly if it leads us to class Carné and Becker with Kazan, Reed and Orson Welles as directors in whose work “it is too easy critically to expose the bare and creaky structure behind the façade.”

Some directors create their own world, some do not: here is a valid distinction. Of those who do, some are more successful than others, some greater, some lesser. Of those who do not, some have still something to give of themselves; some have almost nothing, but work honestly and with professional skill (which we should respect) on whatever material comes to their hand. The directors whom Tony Richardson would be more justified in castigating are surely those false creators, with professional talent beyond the ordinary, with heavyweight pretensions, but without equivalent honesty, insight or sensibility, who undertake significant subjects only to betray them. It is less a question of “dominating” one's material, than of being truthful about it.

The brilliance with which a film is realised is not sufficient to compensate for emptiness, or fundamental falsity of conception. If we praise a film like *On the Waterfront* for the “mastery” (etc., etc.) of its direction, we are attaching considerable over-importance to skill on a very superficial, not to say dubious level. One of the few perceptive reviews that this film found in the British Press (in the *Daily Worker*) remarked

that it was directed “with every dramatic device except sincerity,” and referred to “a noisy collection of emotional tricks.” This is hysterical film-making, every incident whipped up by tricks to a quite spurious dramatic intensity: music to shock and scare, effects that boom, dialogue incomprehensibly shouted or mumbled in a theatrical affectation of realism, looming close-ups that seek to impose their mood on us by sheer size, jazzed-up cutting and compositions meaninglessly bold. A style, in short, of horrid vulgarity; to which the notion of *decorum* is unknown; using every possible device to batter and bemuse.

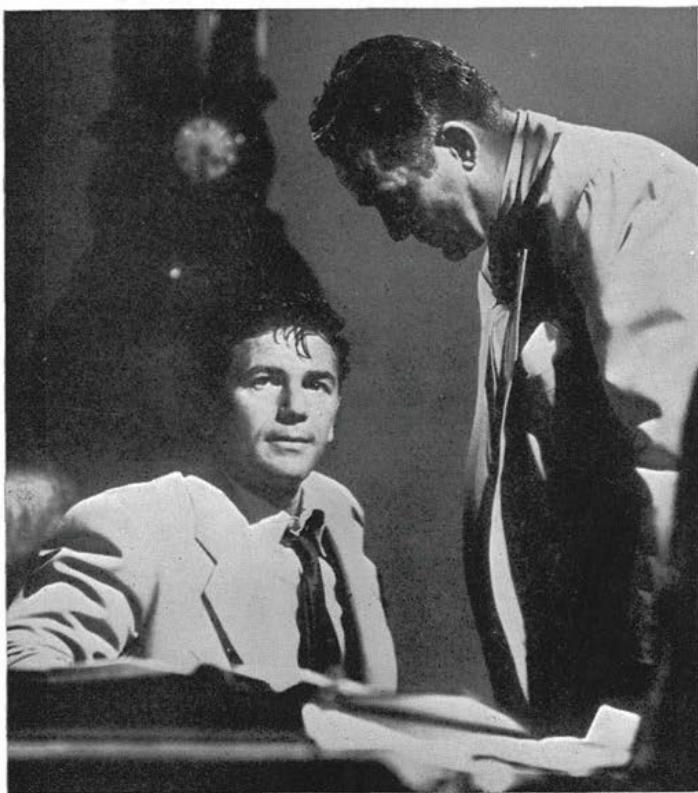
The cinema is a hypnotic medium, we know. An audience surrenders easily to a skilfully-directed barrage of sounds and images and the allure of an attractive and potent personality. All the more urgent that those who have intelligence to use, should use it, to scrutinise and question, to explore for themselves what may be concealed behind the imposing façade. As I have said, *On the Waterfront* is a political film, and should be considered as such. (Interesting, by the way, is the parallel of another director who now finds himself in the same political position as Kazan—the progression of Edward Dmytryk from the apparent revolt of *Give Us This Day*, to the conformist *Caine Mutiny*, to the Catholicism of Graham Greene's *End of the Affair*.) Lest it be thought by this that I am advocating judgment of films according to any narrow set of specific political principles, let me stress that I am not. I prefer to condemn *On the Waterfront* because analysis reveals a deep human falsity, a demagogic dishonesty of argument; not because it fails to conform to any particular political creed. Here, through the human falsity, one detects the social falsity. The *Daily Worker* was right about *On the Waterfront* but merely fatuous about (for instance) *The Quiet Man*. The true critic will preserve his standards independently; and their application must be as impartial as it must be strict.

V

Time was, ere yet in these mistaken days
Ignoble themes obtained mistaken praise,
When sense and wit with poesy allied,
No fabled graces, flourished side by side. . . .

Time was. . . . But perhaps you say that it is too easy to discountenance *On the Waterfront* by going back fifteen years to compare it with a film so generally acknowledged to be a masterpiece as *The Grapes of Wrath*. I will conclude, then, with a word about another film, which shows that younger talents exist which can undertake themes of this importance with integrity and a true passion. Only five years ago Abraham Polonsky, a writer, directed his first film in Hollywood—*Force of Evil*, the story of two brothers, one sharp, one stupid, caught in a situation of civic and political corruption. Here the outcome was reversed: the dumb brother is killed, the shyster is brought by tragedy and by love (the girl in this case no shy wallflower, thank heavens, but a proud and morally pugnacious innocent) to a sense of shame, and an acknowledgment of moral responsibility. A film without tricks, but highly individual in writing and direction; with enough genuine human feeling in it to allow for a sense of humour; finely acted, with a most sensitive study by John Garfield of the central character; a last sequence which enclosed and expressed the essential significance of the fable in a series of stern, forlorn, authentically poetic images. A film which attracted little attention, and less favour.

And where is the director of *Force of Evil* today? It remains his only film. He has been banished from Hollywood for his political sympathies. Abraham Polonsky is not working in the American cinema just now.



John Garfield and Roy Roberts in Abraham Polonsky's "Force of Evil"



JEAN RENOIR directs MARIA FELIX in FRENCH CANCAN
his new film about the Parisian café-concerts

I AM NOT A CAMERA

Michael Redgrave

Early days. Tea with Dame May Whitty on the set of his first film, Hitchcock's "The Lady Vanishes."



"Despite the fact that I so definitely am not a Camera," Michael Redgrave said during his lecture given under the auspices of the British Film Institute Summer School at the 1954 Edinburgh Festival, "and am much too wrapped up in my own processes of creation to observe at all accurately what has been going on under my nose in the past sixteen years, a few diffused impressions have remained, and, such as they are—largely autobiographical and entirely eclectic—I propose to try to bring them into focus."

The following text is taken, slightly abridged and adapted, from the main sections of this lecture.

I WENT into films against what I thought was my better judgment. This is understandable, I think, if you can remember that in 1938 British films were, with certain very honourable exceptions, a joke that wasn't worth making. I did not, I hasten to explain, despise films as films. I had been addicted to them since the days when I was taken to see Miss Annette Kellerman, the aquatic actress, emoting under water in a stuffy bioscope which had formerly been Terry's Theatre in the Strand. I saw *Intolerance* and walked home with my parents while the searchlights picked out the German aircraft, which somehow seemed much less real than Griffith's masterpiece. *The Rink*, *The Tramp*, *Shoulder Arms*, *The Kid*, and much later the early Garbo pictures—all these and many others I saw and loved.

As an undergraduate film critic on *The Granta* I solemnly predicted that talkies would never last, or, if they did, that they would be the ruin of the cinema. About the same time I came into contact with my two friends Humphrey Jennings and Basil Wright. I remember vividly certain scenes of what must have been Wright's first film, which he shot himself—with, I suppose, some help, for he was also the protagonist—in sixteen millimetre. It was a naïve little story of a young fellow from the country who came up to town for the day and got so confused by the London traffic and the noise and all the rest of it that he lost his nerve, his reason—represented by a taut string which broke—and finally his life, knocked down by a motor vehicle of some sort, a bus I fancy, somewhere near Hyde Park Corner. I wish this piece of juvenilia still existed. I remember much of it vividly and

it had some of the lyrical touches which distinguish some of Wright's mature work, as in *Song of Ceylon*.

The Cambridge University Film Society showed us some of the great Russian silent classics, and I think I saw most of these. I remember an especial fondness for *Turksib*—a documentary about the creation of the Turkistan Siberian railway, with its remarkable shots of the irrigation of the desert and the steady push forward of the iron way across the barren wastes. Before this, as a student in Germany, I saw, several times, *The Student of Prague*, *The Golem*, the Fritz Lang *Nibelung Saga*, the early films of the dæmonic, elegant Conrad Veidt and the astonishing and unforgettable young Bergner.

So that, with all this, it seems to me a little odd that when at last I became an actor I should have made such a crablike approach to film acting.

The fact is that I was a snob. Not because I had been suckled on continental silent "classics," for I was equally avid to see the *Ben Hur*s, the *Big Parades*, the Clara Bows, the early Joan Crawfords—how splendid it is that she can still outstare us all!—but because I had become a stage actor, and, in the 'thirties, few serious English stage actors except Charles Laughton took the English movies seriously. As one of them wrote to me when I told him that I was offered a film contract: "Films are where you sell what you have learnt on the stage." That is not quite true, but, all the same, there is some truth in it.

II

The majority of young actors and actresses start out with only the vaguest, most romantic notions of their goal: stardom, names in lights, bowing to a crowded

theatre, seeing heads turn to stare in the street. Relatively few have any idea of what kind of actor they want to be. It is not easy to shape a career in the theatre, but it can be done. It is almost impossible for the actor to shape one in the English cinema. At this moment, though we have many very popular and successful actors—and leaving aside as an exception Olivier's two Shakespeare films—there would seem to be only one English actor who has, as it were, imposed his manner and style on his films, and that of course is Alec Guinness. Nevertheless there is a great deal more intelligent, imaginative and creative as opposed to imitative film-making going on now than in the 'thirties. Then, in England, with the exceptions of Hitchcock, the much underrated Will Hay comedies, the Korda historical romances and a few documentaries, there just seemed to be an eddying current of films—some of them shot with little or no script—in which the actor could sink or swim, if he was lucky and if that was what he wanted, out to and across the Atlantic on a Hollywood contract.

So that, supported by my friends, my idols of the British theatre, most of whom did only occasional films, some none at all, I held back from film acting, for I could see that what one of them said was only too true: "You only have to stand up straight and be able to talk the King's English for someone to offer you a film contract." I remember the advice from, oddly enough, a Hollywood director, George Cukor—a very shrewd observer: "Don't go into films, kid, until they go on their knees to you."

This advice and these persuasions I followed. I would give the same advice to any young actor or actress today. This may sound not a little smug. But it is all the same true that there are some dizzy dozens of film names who discover, too late, that the technique of screen acting is largely a matter of selection and that, having no range of acting resources, they have little from which to select. They then repeat the same performance which, according to their health, looks and vigour, satisfies the public for a certain time. Then, by tacit consent, they have to find something else to do.

On the other hand there are those, like Chaplin or Garbo or some dozen names—not more—that you may care to suggest, who have done more or less the same things in exactly the same way through decades and who are nevertheless the great names of the cinema. How do we account for this? In the case of the Clara Bows, the Carole Lombards, the Valentinos, we may add to their somewhat limited talents the potent, immediate pull of their remarkable looks, plus their correspondence to some contemporary fashion. I think we should also notice, as in the early films of Mary Pickford or Douglas Fairbanks, that even when we view them now their performances are altogether more persuasive than those of their surrounding casts.

To do the same thing over and over again would seem to be an easy task. To do it over years and years and keep a world public fascinated by the spectacle is not so easy. That requires, if not genius, something more than talent. Valentino was not only a face and a fashion. He had an instinctively fastidious technique and knew what to hold back.

We live in an age when more entertainment is offered

per person per square mile than has ever been available before, when the public has been made particularly alive to all the tricks and gimmicks of the showman and the artist. And in this highly and artificially charged atmosphere, actors must continually create the illusion that they are doing something new, or at least something spontaneous. But it is important to remember that there is nothing that is really new. The originality lies in "how," not in "what." The discovery that there were only 36 dramatic situations in all dramatic literature, made by Gozzi over two hundred years ago, is still true today. Since the world does not seem to have tired of those 36 possibilities—with, of course, the interbreeding of two or more of them—the actor seems still likely to be able to earn his living until the remote day when human beings cease to be interested in fiction and are prepared to contemplate only the factual. We need not be escapists to flinch at the thought of that clear, cold dawn.

III

At last, in 1938, I succumbed to the blandishments of Gainsborough Pictures (1928) Limited, having forced the producers, much against their will, to allow me six months each year completely free for stage-work. I also stipulated that I must be paid only when I worked, for it seemed demoralising for actors to be paid for doing nothing. It gave me a certain independence and prevented me from becoming, as some contract actors become, mentally and emotionally, a Strasbourg goose. My first day's work consisted of a scene which was designed to show how boy meets girl: the girl, a rich heiress stranded in a middle-European hotel, was arrogant enough to persuade the manager to turn the boy out of the room above because he, a student of folk music, and his companions were making far too much noise dancing. The young man is evicted from his room and in revenge makes his way into that of the girl, announcing, with a degree of arrogance and bad taste which certainly caps hers, that he is going



As the ventriloquist in Cavalcanti's sequence from "Dead of Night" (1946)



1939. With Edward Rigby in Carol Reed's "The Stars Look Down."

to spend the night there. This beginning to film-work may have seemed an apt enough introduction. All the same, it was not the ideal one. In the first place, I immediately sensed the loss of that essential to good acting on the stage: the rapport between artists who have worked together for at least the rehearsal period. This is, from the actor's point of view, probably the gravest disadvantage of acting for the camera, for one is frequently having to play important scenes with other actors with whom one has never played. These scenes can sometimes be shot in a morning after a hurried introduction, and there they are, inexorably, in the printed film. Often the other actor has not been given the advantage of reading the full script.

The next thing I found I had to learn was rather surprising to me. In the theatre it is not only possible but essential for the actor to find a sequence of physical movements which—allowing for certain necessary conventions such as raising the voice when playing up-stage—seems completely natural to him. Indeed, a break in the flow of his physical movements can disturb or even destroy the stage actor's sense of inner reality. A good director and good actors can so arrange the movement that the characters do not mask each other or make disturbing movements during each other's lines, and yet individually feel that each is in his right place. It is not at all the same in front of the camera, where one is frequently obliged to stand much closer to one's partner than one would ever do in ordinary life, or balance one's voice to a more even level because the microphone cannot "take" extreme changes of volume.

I was prepared, to some extent, for the rigid pattern imposed by the camera movement. I was not prepared to find that I had to "cheat" my movements, and that the camera by being able to point in any direction does to some extent upset the audience's judgment of where things are when seen from a different angle, so that at each "cut" actors, furniture and even the set are subject to a series of "cheats." I understand all that now, of course,

and have adapted myself to it. But to this day I find on occasion the inflexibility of the camera, which demands, for example, that if you have sat down on a certain word of a sentence you should sit down on precisely the same word in another take or from another angle, can produce a wooden effect. It will inhibit the actor until such time as, when he has done enough films, he has developed a technique of doing all those tricky little things such as hitting chalk marks, adjusting his gaze to just right or left of the lens, and all the rest of the complicated machinery of film acting, to the point where they become second nature. For I believe that in good acting there is a continual flow of improvisation, a little tributary stream to freshen, as it were, the main current in its set course.

In the early rehearsals of a play or film, the actor is to a large extent improvising, however carefully he may have studied the words and meaning of his part. These improvisations then have to be as it were selected and annotated until they are no longer strictly speaking improvisational. But within this notated framework there must be a quality of the moment, an imaginative freshness each time the scene is played so that the actor feels that he is saying those very words or doing those very things always for the very first time. Since even the finest actors and actresses of the stage will admit that it is only from time to time that they satisfy themselves in this matter throughout a long stage role, how much more easy is it to understand that the film actor, conceiving and developing and constructing a long part over many months, usually out of continuity, very seldom satisfies himself throughout even one morning—there is always some line, some move, some look, some little hesitation he feels he might have done better. Here he is often wrong. Frequently certain moments of early takes are altogether more plausible and effective than when, after repeated takes, the actor has begun to "set" his performance. As he begins to do this, consciously to polish little moments which grew out of improvisation, he tends to lose that first impetus which gave life to the scene. He sometimes begins to forget the situation, or to anticipate a climax. This anticipation of a climax is one of the commonest traps of the actor, either on the stage or screen. It is easier to avoid this pitfall on the screen, for the actor is not conscious of how the climax



1940. In Carol Reed's "Kipps."

of the scene will shape—whereas on the stage he has heard it all through rehearsals and night after night.

This is all to do with that creative mood which must be found before real acting can begin. When it is found nothing seems an effort. Until it is found everything is. Fortunately for actors who love acting with all their heart and soul and who do not secretly despise their craft, this mood is at hand more or less at will.

IV

I have learned nearly all the little I know about film acting through my directors. From Hitchcock, who directed my first film, I learned to do as I was told and not to worry too much. Hitchcock, being the brilliant master of the technical side of the script that he is, knew that he could get a performance out of me by his own skill in cutting. He knew that mine was a very good part, that I was more or less the right type for it, that I was sufficiently trained to be able to rattle off my lines and that mercifully I was never particularly camera-conscious. But he also sensed that I thought the whole atmosphere of filming was, to say the least, uncongenial compared to that obtaining in the theatre, where every night I was playing in a Tchekov play with John Gielgud, Peggy Ashcroft, Gwen Ffrangcon-Davies, Alec Guinness and a completely remarkable cast. One of the tricks which Hitchcock works on the psychology of the public is to cast people against their type; he also uses shock tactics on his actors, and besides his famous practical jokes he likes to “rib” his actors, believing, sometimes rightly, that, having an infinite capacity for taking praise, they are jolted into a more awake state if humorously insulted. I well remember him saying “Actors are cattle.” I can see now that he was trying to jolt me out of my unrealistic dislike of working conditions in the studios and what he thought was a sentimental reverence for the theatre. *The Lady Vanishes* is considered by many people as Hitchcock’s masterpiece. It is quintessential Hitchcock. I could never bring myself to see it until 15 years later, when I saw it the Christmas before last in New York, where it is still frequently played each year.

The method of my second director, Paul Czinner, was in some ways the complete reverse, and that was to make



1950. In Anthony Asquith's "The Browning Version."

me feel that I was a good enough artist to play opposite my adored Elizabeth Bergner. He further explained to me that whereas there was never time for what stage actors would call proper rehearsals, the camera was often able to catch the artist's emotions or reactions when these were still in their early improvisational stages. He printed all the takes, and there were usually a great many, of all the shots. He explained that by frequent close cutting and the selection of a look from one take, a line from another, and a particular though perhaps quite irrelevant expression from a third, a performance was often very much richer than the actor felt it to be even in his “best” take. He personally directed the cutting of the film over many months. This, of course, is a very expensive method and has gone completely out of fashion. The tendency now is to use a great number of tracking shots, and much work is done from “dollies” and cranes. In a way this would seem preferable from the actor's point of view, for it allows him to build up a scene, to know how he is going to make his effects more or less on his own. But some of these moving shots are extremely difficult for the technicians as well as for the actor, and it is very galling to the latter to find that the take which he has felt to be unquestionably the best from the acting point of view has to be scrapped because someone fancies he can see a mike shadow. Only a very few actors can afford, halfway through a take which they know is not to their liking, deliberately to “dry” and compel the scene to be started again. Nevertheless, if it is permitted for the cameraman or the sound department to reject takes or whole scenes because they are not personally satisfied with the technical result, it should also be permitted to the actor to veto certain takes.

It is perhaps from Carol Reed, with whom I made my third film and with whom I was to make two more, that I learned for the first time how intimate the relationship between actor and film director can be. Reed understands the actor's temperament perhaps as well as any director

1952. In Anthony Asquith's "The Importance of Being Earnest," with Margaret Rutherford, Miles Malleon, Joan Greenwood, Edith Evans, Dorothy Tutin, Michael Denison.

alive; and he is able, with infinite pains and care, to give the actor the impression that everything is up to him and that all the director is doing is to make sure that he is being seen to his best advantage. A very warm and friendly feeling prevails on the set, and the actor is also encouraged to feel that he has assisted in the preparation of the film. Indeed, Reed frequently did ask my opinions, and I think on several occasions adopted suggestions of mine. Such as when we were shooting *The Stars Look Down* in a narrow street of miners' cottages in Cumberland, and I noticed a child sweeping up a puddle in the road with a determination in its face and a sensuous pleasure in every sweep of the broom. I do not remember now whether this decorative incident is in the finished film, for by the time the camera had to turn the child's mother had dressed her in her Sunday frock and put her hair in ribbons. I do remember Reed being infinitely tactful about this. He is enormously considerate of other people's feelings, but beneath this gentle velvet glove is an iron will which eleven times out of ten will have its own way in the end.

Reed is one of those dedicated beings, the artist who is completely absorbed by his dream. He eats, drinks and sleeps cinema. You might hear him carrying on an eager conversation with a farmer, a chemist or a nuclear physicist, but that would not necessarily mean he is even for a moment interested in farming, chemistry or nuclear physics. It would be more likely that he was studying the farmer's way of scratching his head to punctuate his conversation, the chemist's tone of voice or the particular physicist's calm way of letting drop horrendous statistics. He would not be purposely observing these. It is his habit. If he had nothing else to observe he would watch a flea. He has a very friendly and charming way of asking a lot of gentle questions and watching you as you give the answers with his big blue eyes wide as a child's when listening to a story. The wide ingenuousness is almost too good to be true, and his repeated exclamations of surprise or incredulity: "Do you really?" "That's fascinating!" "How true!" would strike one as naïve to the point of absurdity if after a short time one did not become aware that these simple, direct questions are not so simple nor so direct as they seem. Unwittingly you have supplied him with an answer or clue to some quite different question. He would, I think, disclaim this, and he seldom, I am sure, consciously lays traps. He is not an intellectual man, and like most intuitive artists he mistrusts analysis. He does not seek to be startlingly original, nor astoundingly daring. Being trained in the hard school of commercial cinema under such experts as the late Ted Black, and of success by his early master, Edgar Wallace, one of his big blue eyes always has at least an oblique squint in the direction of the box-office. This is not intended as a criticism of Reed's achievement. Some of the greatest and most daringly original artists are often considerable showmen.

This creative collaboration I have in varying degrees experienced a number of times, and when it happens filmmaking becomes every bit as absorbing and exciting for the actor as the creation of a great role on the stage. There have been occasions, as when working with Orson Welles, even until 3.30 in the morning, when I have not wanted to stop. I felt the same with Asquith, especially in *The Browning Version*, and with Cavalcanti in the "Ventrilo-

quist" sequence we did together in *Dead of Night*. With Reed again in *Kipps*, when we worked at Shepherds Bush throughout the 1940 blitz, and were both living in flats in the same building so that we could meet in the evenings and talk: a time I remember above all because of its utter divorce from any reality except that of creative work. For to face the cameras each morning as a younger man than myself, I was obliged to take heavy sleeping pills each night in order to sleep through the noise of the bombardment. And there in the morning on the set would be Diana Wynyard, who often had to drive through the tail-end of the raid to have her hair washed and set and be made up to appear by 8 o'clock, ravishingly gowned by Cecil Beaton and only a degree less beautiful than she is now, fourteen years later. In the evening we left the studio ten minutes before black-out and, as we drove home in the dusk, the sirens would start. If they did not, I remember, we were faintly worried. No wonder that my memory of the blitz is largely a picture of a fictitious Folkestone in Edwardian dress.

In America, later, I worked with Fritz Lang, who taught me what it is like to be caught up in the Hollywood machine, working in a studio where your personal telephone calls are liable to be tapped. Lang would often ask me about working in England. It seemed to be the dream of most of the lively creative talents in Hollywood and New York in 1947. I urged him to come and direct Dylan Thomas's *The Doctor and the Devils*, which I had persuaded the Rank Organisation to buy for me—for Lang had shown in his first film for M-G-M, *Fury*, that he, like Renoir in his *Swamp Water* and *The Southerner*, could triumphantly absorb material which was not native to him. *The Doctor and the Devils*, which Dylan Thomas later published in script form, was one of many subjects I tried hard to get made about that time. I was told it was impossible because a B picture with, I think, Boris Karloff, on the subject of the body-snatchers had been made a year or two before.

The film (*The Secret Beyond the Door*) I made in Hollywood with Lang—which I have never seen—had a silly story, pseudo-psychological and pretentious, but as Lang had just made two very successful and exciting pictures out of stories which seemed to me equally preposterous, I accepted it. I wanted to work with Lang. I thought I could learn something from him. I certainly learnt one thing, even if I did not know it already: that in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, the creative germ of a picture is in its idea. If you have a germinating idea, the idea which may not only catch the imagination of the public, but which fires the mind of the writer, the director, the actors and everyone working on the picture, you are halfway there. Best of all, as I have heard Welles say, is to believe that each film you make will be a *great* picture. "If you don't believe it will be *great* there's little chance of it being anything but just another picture." He is right. And it is something one must believe, not just something one says.

V

Finally, what about the current fashionable prejudice about the superiority of the non-actor, the well-directed amateur, to the trained professional? Despite early pictures such as *Dr. Caligari*, the *Nibelungs*, the cartoons of Disney, the Shakespeare films of Olivier, a tendency towards realism has always been a trademark of films.

No wonder that there should have grown up an increasing interest in what are known as real people. How understandable, and what a fallacy! For, except in the materialistic sense, *Madame Bovary* or *Mr. Pickwick* is likely to be much more real to us than anyone we meet in the street.

After a long tracking shot of a line of actors on parade for a prison camp scene, the director thought he would have a complementary shot of some of the soldiers who were lent to the film company as extras. "Now let's have some *real* faces!" he exclaimed. And in a recent issue of *SIGHT AND SOUND* the reviewer of *Knave of Hearts* also delights in the fact that the hidden camera in the streets gives us "real" faces. In the sense that the average film extra's face is not real since self-consciousness makes his face temporarily not his own, I share this delight. Film extras are not highly skilled or they would not be film extras. A harsh fact, but a fact. But the face of Spencer Tracy? Is that not real? Even when, as occasionally, he will "mug" to get a laugh? In private life, do not we occasionally "mug" to show our feelings or underline a point?

This prejudice is easily understood. Over the years, after seeing an actor play a number of different roles, there is inevitably an accretion of past association, multiple, complex beyond analysis. If the actor is of a lively imagination, as all good actors are, he soon secures that suspension of disbelief which is to my mind the indispensable stepping-stone to a work of art. Without such an actor and such suspension of disbelief, *Monsieur Vincent*, the film of the life of St. Vincent de Paul, would never have moved us to the depths of our being. I have not seen the film of Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral*, but I have been given every reason to doubt that the priest who played Thomas à Becket could persuade us as Pierre Fresnay persuaded us. Persuasion is what matters in art, not conviction.

When Guinness or Danny Kaye plays six different parts in one film, what do we feel then? Oh, that is different, we say, for that is a *tour de force* which commands our suspension of disbelief. If Guinness or Paul Muni, or one or two other actors, disguise themselves utterly, what then? Again we accept this if it comes off. If it comes off rarely in films, it is because it is comparatively rarely attempted, owing to the expense of the medium. To create a complete character performance can only be trusted to established actors who are masters of that branch of acting whereby they change visibly from part to part, even to the extent of putting on weight or taking it off at will. This is not necessarily the highest branch of the acting art, but it is not an easy one to climb. Nor is it easy of course to take a child or a man with no acting experience and mould a performance out of him such as Reed did in *The Fallen Idol*, or as de Sica did with the hero of *Bicycle Thieves*, or as Pudovkin claims can be done with anyone, more or less, by the director's art.

I have made it clear, I hope, that I accept and admire the scope of documentary film-making. But from the actor's point of view I think that the intellectual assumption that "real" people—or, as I would put it, "non-actors"—are nearer to the truth than trained actors



Carol Reed and Michael Redgrave on the set of "Kipps." "He has a very friendly and charming way of asking a lot of gentle questions and watching you as you give the answers with his big blue eyes wide as a child's when listening to a story."

depends on what you mean by truth. Personally I feel, as Leigh Hunt did, that there is more truth in the verisimilitudes of fiction than in the assumptions of history, and—I would add—than in the documentation of that notorious liar, the candid camera.

Actors are the only sincere hypocrites. Actuality has, of course, its appeal and its prescribed place for the screen. But *Verismo*, the mingling of actuality and fiction, the dragging in of realistic detail as a kind of decoration, can become a pernicious business—we taste it and spew it up just as in certain novels and plays we spew up the autobiographical content when we feel it is not correctly fused with the creative. It is a special danger in films where it is so easy to set up a camera and see what happens. The mind behind the camera, which selects what it is going to shoot and then edits what is shot, must be the mind of the creative artist; and the creative artist must, in order to achieve his effect of truth, control the perspective. Perspective is a form of distortion. It is the science or art of bringing three dimensions into the scope of two.

The actor must share this gift of perspective. He must persuade you that he is living his part while he is not. I dislike the candid camera not because it is unflattering, but because my senses tell me it lies, ninety-nine times out of a hundred. I dislike reportage for the same reason. There is of course the hundredth occasion when one or other tells an acceptable truth. The artist and the actor are not allowed so wide a margin of error.

William Heinemann Ltd., who have published Michael Redgrave's lectures on acting for the theatre, "The Actor's Ways and Means," will be publishing the Edinburgh lecture in expanded form with other material in the spring.



AROUND THE SET

Top left: : David Lean and Katharine Hepburn on location in Venice for "Summertime," the film of the Arthur Laurents play, "Time of the Cuckoo," that starred Shirley Booth on Broadway. David Lean directed this story of a middle-aged American secretary's romantic disillusion on her first trip to Europe, mainly on location in Venice. Other players include Rossano Brazzi and Geraldine Brooks. (Photo by Per-Olow.)

Below : Famous actor, Charles Laughton, now directs his first film "Night of the Hunter," from the novel by Davis Grubb. Leading players in this psychological thriller are Robert Mitchum (seen here with Laughton), Shelley Winters and Lillian Gish.

Summertime

Night of the Hunter





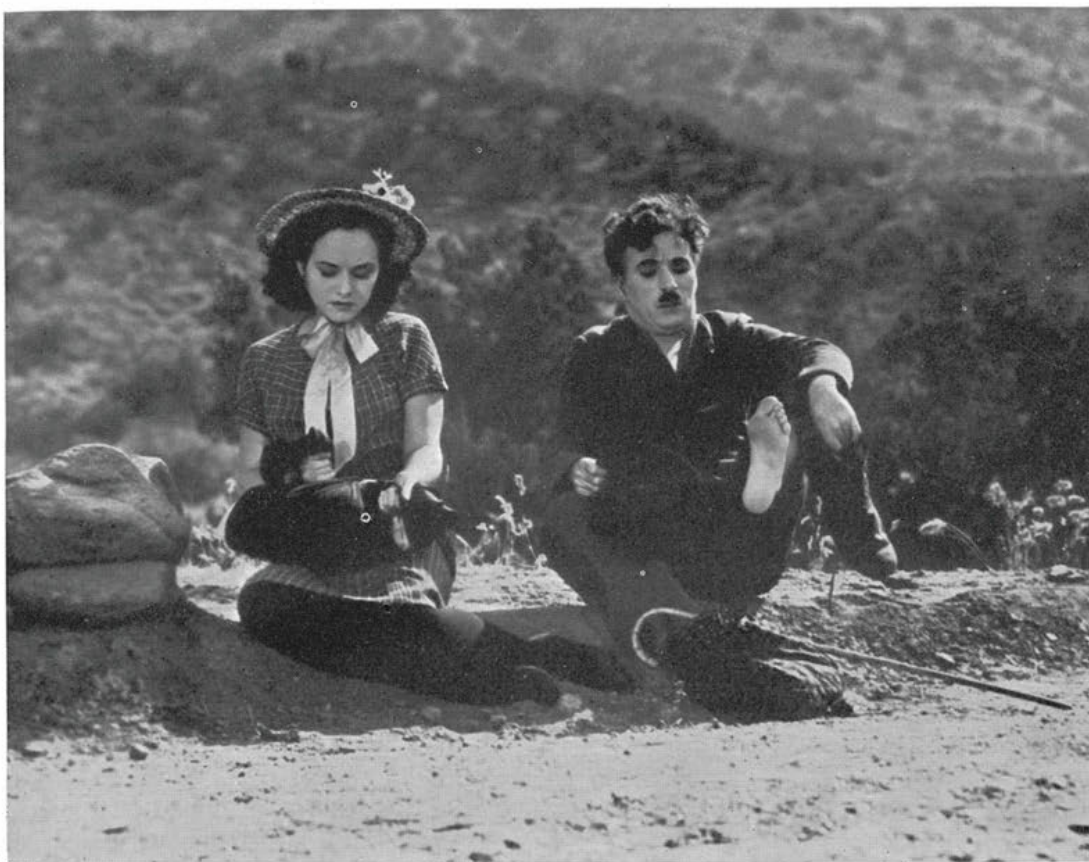
The Rose Tattoo

Top right: Danny Kaye visits Anna Magnani on the set of "The Rose Tattoo." Others, left to right, are producer Hal Wallis, cameraman James Wong Howe and director Daniel Mann. Magnani's first American picture, in which she plays opposite Burt Lancaster, is based on the play specially written for her by Tennessee Williams.

Below : Richard Burton and the famous Eva le Gallienne, one of America's most distinguished actresses, specialist in Tchekov and Shakespeare, on the set of "Prince of Players." This CinemaScope biography, directed by Philip Dunne, of the actor Edwin Booth (played by Burton), contains scenes from "Romeo and Juliet" and "Hamlet." Miss le Gallienne plays Gertrude to Burton's Hamlet.



Prince of Players



The refugees: Paulette Goddard and Chaplin in "Modern Times."

FILM REVIEWS

MODERN TIMES

The whole of Chaplin: that's not something we can seize on and discuss, like the whole of *Don Quixote* or Constable or Wagner's operas. It's dotted about in time, so that at the moment, for example, our attention is fixed on *Modern Times*, with *Limelight* and *City Lights* a little further off, and perhaps one or two early bits like *The Pawnshop* or *Easy Street* that don't come within the restricted range. Chaplin ensures that we shan't tire of him; our experience is spread over a life-time, and each generation comes in at a different point. All, no doubt, for our pleasure and his profit. But it doesn't make criticism easy. One has to rely sometimes on memory going back twenty-five years and more, and possibly this isn't the kind of criticism he seeks. How does the battlefield of *The Great Dictator* compare with that of *Shoulder Arms*? Can we take a look down that long line of girls? Aren't there, all through his work, two Charlies—the Saint and the Rat? What, if any, affinities are there between M. Verdoux's tart and the Woman of Paris. Never mind, he says.

But we do mind; especially if we have lived through the Chaplin saga as it unrolled. I thrilled to the early Charlies week by week, or fortnight by fortnight, as a child. *Modern Times* can't be dissociated from the Slump. It seemed to us then the greatest of Chaplin films, because in it he summed up not only life but the particular distresses of living in the mid-thirties. His slaves of the conveyor-belt improved on Clair's in *A Nous la Liberté*; he dared to be careless and funny about machinery, and funny even about clashes between unemployed

and police—a sacrosanct subject upon which indignation, to the Left or the Right, was the rule. These audacities have dimmed, as we stare out over the forest of television masts. Communism and Lor'an'order now appear to us machineries—monstrous as those in the factory; and we enjoy Charlie's evasions from the one as from the other. Without the immediate pressures a little of the excitement and fun has vanished: only a little, perhaps, but I mention it because, while *City Lights* revived excels one's memory, *Modern Times* falls a trifle short. It doesn't, I may say—so far as I am concerned—amount to disappointment.

The beginning is superb as ever: nowhere in all Chaplin will you find such a set-piece as this factory, with its boss worrying over a jigsaw and barking out of a screen to speed up production, the huge, hungry machines, the clocking-in and the lock-out, the dreadful conveyor-belt, which is like Time in its ever-hurrying passage, and Charlie himself, the loose screw, the car-wheel going slowly backwards. He plays his part in the line with a lyrical swing; he leaves off for an instant to scratch and his error sweeps on; when there's argument he merely points to that vanishing strip, and all hands except his fly to it. And what are they doing? Tightening screws. After a spell of it Charlie steps away with his robot reflexes still working; a tremendous shudder, and they are flung off; he returns to normal. But one day the robot won't be exorcised; he sees buttons on female backs and bosoms, and runs to tighten them. The lunacy of a machine world is exploded by a higher lunacy, a superior machinery: has it even yet been recognised how the great comedian works with precision tools? The

whole of this satirical fantasy is flawlessly exact, down to—or rather up to—the gadgety feeder: a wonderful piece of imagery that breathlessly amuses and whacks hard. The machine starts impeccably with spoonfuls of soup, revolving corn-cob, well-timed squares of bread, periodical mouth-wipe; and then, horribly, goes mad. Charlie—whose whole existence in this film might be summed up, “*If I were a machine*”—goes mad too, but of course lyrically. His subsequent adventures are daydreams of odd jobs, love in a cottage, cocaine, roller-skating, prison, labour troubles, waiting, the run of a big store, all with a bite on reality. These are rather instances piled up than a theme or fairy tale unrolled, but on or near his top level. And before shuffling away with his Goddard, he has broken silence for the first time with a limelit patter song.

Modern Times achieves, with the dictators of the next film we shall be allowed to see, his most radiant satire, and marks a step in his autobiography and ours. Not to have seen it several times will mean missing our place on that divine conveyor-belt which may yet turn up laughs on the people's democracy and the atom bomb.

WILLIAM WHITEBAIT.

THE GREAT ADVENTURE

Fascination with the natural world, and with animals in particular, throbs through most of Sucksdorff's films. In this he is not in any way unique; there have been a number of films recently using similar material, and each has brought to the natural world the emotions and attitudes of its observers. At one extreme are the Disney films; their first reaction is a vague but sincere gape at the size and variety of Nature, their second a rather relieved grin as they recognise, anthropomorphically, the possibility of comparison with the human world. Much of the material Disney and his colleagues have collated is very spectacular, but the films suffer by his sentimentality (in the whole of *The Living Desert* one bat out of several thousand was the only casualty) and his over-generalisation. There is little relation of the creatures to the environment within any of the “True Life” films as a whole. Here films like the Hungarian *Kingdom on the Waters* and the charming little Russian documentary *Story of a Ring* have scored. In each of these one has an acute sense of locale. But Sucksdorff alone has brought poetry to ecology.

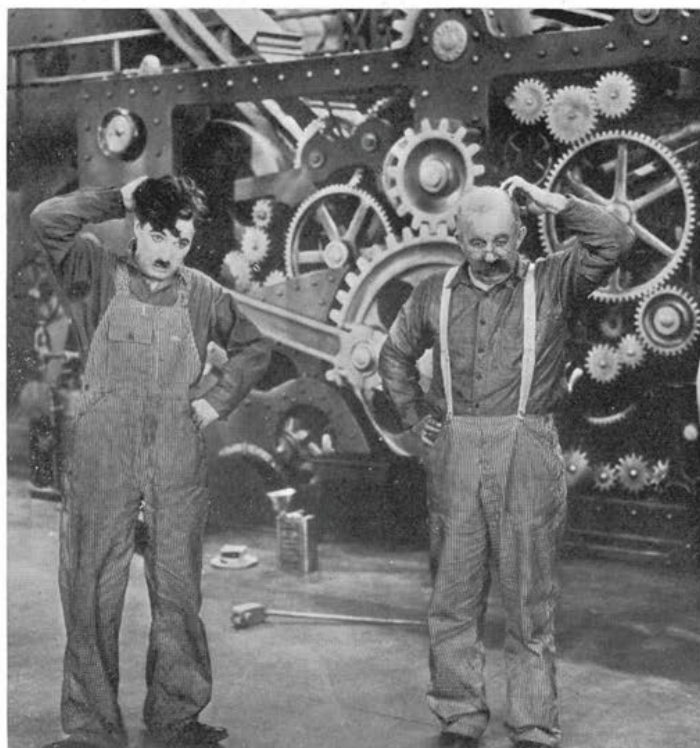
If, unlike Disney, Sucksdorff never distorts his world, he limits it quite sharply. For Strindberg's compatriot, Nature is red in tooth and claw, and it is the beasts of prey who dominate his attention. This was true of his earlier work (*A Divided World*) and is no less true of *The Great Adventure* (Films de France). The lynx, the fox, the otter, and the woodcocks savage in their matings, are his heroes; deer exist only to be startled, hares to flee away, dabchicks to be devoured. This emphasis gives the film its particular flavour: a fierce sensuousness, both primitive and refined. It is reinforced by the setting, a Swedish forest heavy and steaming in the summer, sharply delicate in its winter outlines. Sucksdorff does not impose this mood in any way, nor does he force either tone or allegory on to the animals he watches. He merely notes, with keen raptness, all their moods. His foxcubs fight over a chicken they are tearing apart, only to play in the sun next moment or tentatively climb the branches of a tree or ford a swift mountain stream. Never have any animals been caught so splendidly and completely as this. Otter and fox gambol together, and—even more surprising—a young dogfox dances in the moonlight with washing hanging on a line. Sucksdorff is just as sensitive to atmosphere. The opening sequence of the film is entrancing, a world of early mist and sunlight, of dew on grass and cobweb, of bubbles rising mysteriously in the river as otters pursue their prey beneath its surface. Compositionally, the film is ravishing: corn waving, reeds in the mud, saplings against the snow, have the linear grace and delicacy of a Hokusai or an Utamaru. And, with the help of a magnetophone, Sucksdorff has composed an elaborate soundtrack of the startling, vivid calls and breathings of the forest.

The film falls roughly into two parts. The first tells the story of the foxcubs, the second that of an otter rescued and secretly held captive by two boys living on a farm near the forest. Sucksdorff has attempted to relate them by giving the

film a seasonal framework, but it must be admitted that he does not completely succeed in integrating the different parts. The difficulty is mainly with the second episode. Until then, Sucksdorff's role has been that of observer, a keen, gifted, occasionally contemplative observer, watching from the outside. This works well enough while the human beings are seen only in their immediate relationship to the animals, the hunter to the hunted. In the second half, emphasis necessarily goes to the children, to their motives and their relationships. Well as Sucksdorff shoots a scene, admirably as he elicits responses from the children (especially from the younger boy, his own son), the method is different—less brilliant, even at times a little pedestrian. Perhaps any mingling of the two was bound to fail. Flaherty's handling of a similar problem in *Louisiana Story* makes a revealing comparison. In the boy exploring the bayou swamps, tending his racoon, watching the oil derricks, Flaherty found an incarnation of the attitude behind his film—a raw wonder, a simple delighted acceptance of the natural world, that represents a whole American attitude to nature. (The Disney films represent the same thing more coarsely but no less genuinely.) But Sucksdorff's vision is too sophisticated ever to be equated with a child's. Absorbed as he is, he never quite forgets the human world, its conflicts and hostilities. At his most original, and in the film's most miraculous sequence, he can contemplate both: jet planes dive in formation, their white tracks the only marks in a cloudless sky, while little owls watch them from below, merging in their stillness with the rocks and branches on which they sit.

If the story of the children is the most striking case of this change in imaginative viewpoint, it is nevertheless indicative of the whole film; and in this not unlike *Jeux Interdits*, to which Catherine de la Roche in her article in *SIGHT AND SOUND* wrote that Sucksdorff compared his film. While *The Great Adventure* opens with the atmosphere of a spring dawn, its references to changing seasons become less and less explicit. The blackcocks are noted in a detached, conventionally documentary way, while Sucksdorff identifies himself with the fox in death. In the boys' story, too, there are moral references. It is not in the working out of any of their implications that the film's value lies, however, but in the detailed observation of the animals themselves. If these considerations prevent the film from reaching the perfection of a *Louisiana Story*, the actual achievement is impressive enough. *The Great Adventure* remains a series of notes, of jottings, rather than a whole, but the notes themselves are always absorbing and enjoyable. At their best they are recorded with a poet's eye—and a poet's passion.

TONY RICHARDSON.



‘Lunacy of a machine world.’ Chaplin and Chester Conklin in “*Modern Times*.”



'Lament.' Matt Mattox, Jeff Richards, Russ Tamblyn, Tommy Rall in "Seven Brides for Seven Brothers."

SEVEN BRIDES FOR SEVEN BROTHERS

How evocative now those credit titles on M-G-M musicals have become; not even a slight wince from the first sight of them on a CinemaScope screen can spoil that little upsurge of anticipation as the names of old and new friends appear. Familiarity, of course, has made one a little clannish, and it was a definite shock to find that *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers* was *not*, for example, produced by Arthur Freed—however unfair that may be to Jack Cummings. In this world, strangers are regarded with suspicion and even fear, unless preceded by reliable rumours of their talent and eligibility. But the names of Albert Hackett and Frances Goodrich, enshrined since *The Pirate* and *Summer Holiday*, are more than welcome, even if the intrusion of Dorothy Kingsley below may cause an eyebrow to be momentarily raised, a jealous heart to palpitate. (The source of the film, a story by Stephen Vincent Benet called *Sobbin' Women*, seems interesting; one must always be prepared for incongruity of sources, such as a play by Eugene O'Neill or an S. N. Behrman comedy written for the Lunts.) Lyrics and music by Gene de Paul and Johnny Mercer, photography by George Folsey, settings by Cedric Gibbons and Urie McCleary—these look all right. Michael Kidd, greatly admired since *The Band Wagon*, is up there as choreographer, and Stanley Donen, of course, as director. It has to be admitted, though, that the cast list is not altogether encouraging; on the credit side, some members of the New York City Ballet and the pleasant enough Howard Keel, but beyond them—only Jane Powell and the unknown.

The film itself, indeed, reflects to some degree this alternating confidence and uncertainty. The story is admirable and quite wittily scripted: Adam, eldest of the seven wild Pontipee brothers living on a farm way up in the hillbilly country, gets himself a bride, and the others, amazed by his initiative, decide to follow the example of the Romans with the Sabine women and carry off six girls from the nearby village. An avalanche isolates the farm for the whole winter, and by spring the original sobbin' cartload has become more than reconciled to its fate. In the general brightness of situation, the use of decorative painted backdrops for some of the landscape settings, and the construction of the whole film—whereby the plot always serves as a springboard for the song and dance numbers—this is clearly an adventurous musical in the best modern tradition.

Above all, it has some brilliantly inventive numbers. There is a hoedown at a village fair in which the Pontipees dance with the girls of their choice and show off in front of their other admirers; here Michael Kidd and Stanley Donen create

a bold and acrobatic square dance, full of exhilarating stomps, leaps and claps, which merges into some crisply handled slapstick as a barn-raising contest explodes into a free-for-all. In complete contrast, the winter "Lament" against a backdrop of pinetrees and snow, as four of the brothers pine for the girls they will shortly carry off, has some ironically slow, languorous movement and groupings; and the bloomed "brides," in the January of their captivity, dream of a June wedding and perform a wistful ensemble in their attic bedroom.

These certainly would have a high place in the anthology; and there are others—Adam's bride instructing the Pontipees in the refined art of "Goin' Courtin'," "Sobbin'," in which Adam tells his brothers the story of the Sabine women, the song and dance with which brides and grooms welcome the spring—that are original and charming. The romantic comedy of the dialogue scenes, however, is not altogether successful. This is partly due to Jane Powell, whose style is somewhat metallic and who lacks the depth of character for Milly, Adam's wife; and also to CinemaScope, which deprives some passages of the lightness and intimacy they need. After a slowish start, and two fairly unremarkable numbers, Milly's arrival at the farm, her discovery of six Pontipees in various degrees of unshaven animal existence, is engagingly done—and these folksy humours continue to provide the best element in the story. But when something more is demanded, in the relationship between Adam and Milly, both creatures of impulse and pride, one becomes conscious of strain; real sentiment is lacking, and the situations are weakened.

This said, *Seven Brides* still holds an honourable place. If the period that began with *Meet Me in St. Louis* and continued through *Ziegfeld Follies*, *The Pirate*, *Summer Holiday*, *Good News* to *On The Town* seems to have lost, since then, something of its original verve and completeness, *Seven Brides* undoubtedly renews its spirit. Except for CinemaScope, too, it is agreeably free of inflation. Fortunately, with a story requiring that there are seldom less than seven people on the screen, opportunities exist for filling the space more naturally and relevantly than usual, and these are skilfully taken. But the new screen adds nothing. George Cukor tries to solve its problems in a different way with *A Star is Born* (with mainly low-key effects that spotlight central action and leave the sides of the frame in semi-darkness), and it is just when one sees the 2.55:1 ratio used with more flexibility, more awareness of its problems than usual, that one feels most certain it is, ultimately, just a handicap.

GAVIN LAMBERT.

RIOT IN CELL BLOCK 11

After a brief factual introduction surveying the national extent of the problem, *Riot in Cell Block 11* (Allied Artists—A.B. Pathé) gives a straightforward account of the progress of a riot in an American prison. Documentary in method—sequences were shot on location in Folsom Prison, inmates were used in the crowd scenes, no stars in the major parts, and facts were scrupulously got right—the film completely succeeds in doing what its makers intended: to tell its story with uncompromising authenticity so that the subject matter might become better and more widely known. A riot breaks out in an antiquated cell block: warders are taken as hostages and the prisoners present their demands for better conditions. A three-cornered battle develops between the prisoners, the warden, who wants to accede to their demands, and a corrupt minor politico who has been sent down by the state legislature to mediate. The power of the prisoners' threats proves too great and they get their promise of reform. A few weeks later, the promises still unfulfilled, the leader of the rioters is, in spite of the No Reprisals clause, charged with incitement to riot and faces a sentence of 30 years' imprisonment. The last sequence is typical of the film's approach: the problem has been truthfully stated and the unpleasant conclusion is (at the risk of an anti-climax, for the film's action is over) not evaded.

Because it makes its conflicts tough and real without resorting to unmotivated melodrama—there is violence in the film, of course, but it is conveyed without sensationalism—*Riot in Cell Block 11* is extraordinarily gripping. The issues are clearly established for our consideration but the film never takes sides: on the one hand we see the warden and the necessity for discipline; on the other, the prisoners, using violence as their only weapon in the fight for better conditions. The *impasse* is real and, the film implies, inevitable while conditions last. When finally the prisoners gain their victory, it is not suggested that anything much has been won except a useful bit of publicity and a few minor concessions: the machinery of the indifferent legislature will continue to work slowly. It is a considerable achievement to have stated these facts and human conflicts so sanely—only the legislature gets off a little lightly, one feels—yet to have made so intensely exciting a film.

Riot in Cell Block 11 is said to have been made on a B-picture budget, but is technically in complete control of its material: it proceeds in so craftsmanlike a manner that one is not tempted to analyse the contributions of producer (Walter

Wanger), director (Don Siegel) and writer (Richard Collins). The scenes of the crowds of prisoners breaking into the yard are brilliantly handled, and the narrative as a whole has a crisp, purposeful tempo about it. *Riot in Cell Block 11* is, in fact, one of the most effective pieces of film journalism to have come our way for a long time.

Though the film's method never attempts a very deep study of character, the performances of a largely unknown cast are excellent. Neville Brand as the chief rioter gives a performance of stern, moody concentration and Leo Gordon admirably conveys the pathological thug's compulsive outbreaks of ferocity. Emile Meyer's warden suggests the unassuming practical decency of the dedicated public servant with a subtle individuality.

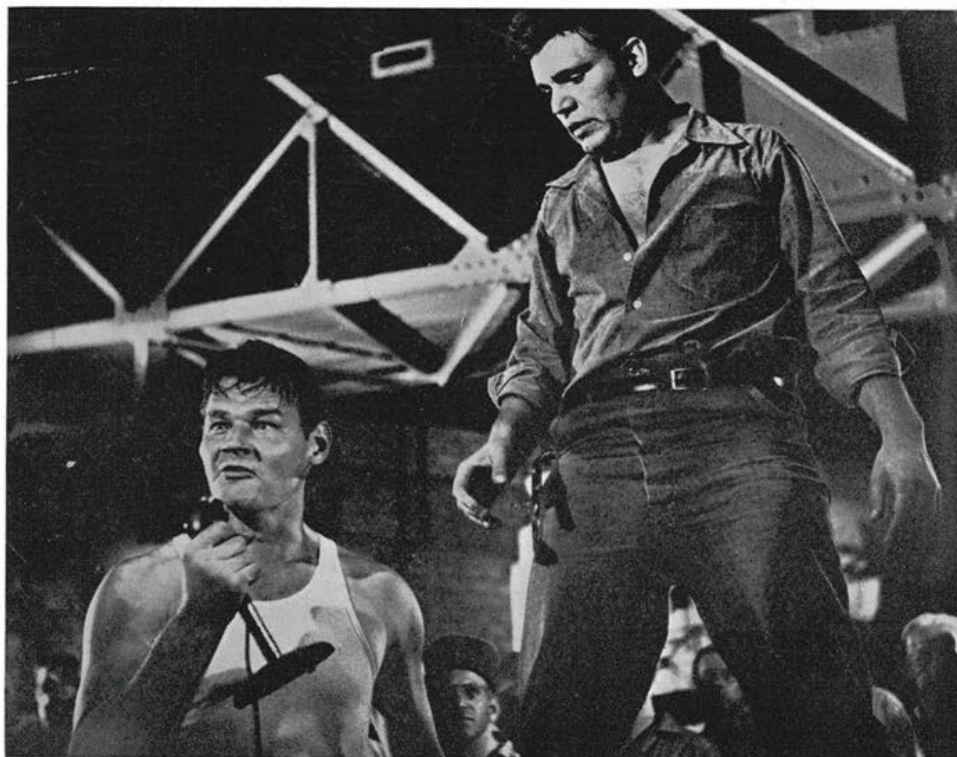
KAREL REISZ.

THE INSPECTOR GENERAL and THE ANNA CROSS

One of the main developments in the postwar Soviet cinema has been the emergence of what might be termed the "record" film. Famous ballet and opera stars have been seen in numerous theatrically produced excerpts from well-known Russian productions, and a number of popular nineteenth century writers have been adapted (with varying degrees of success) for the screen. Into this category fall Gogol's *The Inspector General*, scripted and directed by the veteran Vladimir Petrov (who made *Peter the Great*), and *The Anna Cross* (Gala), a version of Tchekov's short story by a newcomer, I. Annensky. Both are photographed in Agfacolor, and the latter, incidentally, is the first of a group of Tchekov films produced during 1954, the fiftieth anniversary of his death.

Gogol's comedy about the minor St. Petersburg official who successfully deceives the corrupt mayor and merchants of a small provincial town into accepting him as an important government inspector is, presumably, well loved in Russia; and Petrov does not seem to have tried to reshape it in filmic terms. The script is a literal transcription of the play, it is rather crudely acted in a heavy theatrical manner (the players wear obvious stage make-up) and, to a western audience, the result on the whole is disappointingly dull and unfunny. The leading characters shout their lines at each other most of the time, and inevitably the wit and satirical edge of the original dialogue evaporate in some roughly translated subtitles.

Annensky, on the other hand, has inflated the Tchekov piece into a fairly lavish prestige production. This story of a young girl unhappily married to an elderly official, who suddenly finds



Leo Gordon and Neville Brand in
"Riot in Cell Block 11."



Richard Quine and the femme fatale. Left, Dianne Foster, Kevin McCarthy and Mickey Rooney in "Drive a Crooked Road." Right, Fred MacMurray and Kim Novak in "Pushover."

herself precipitated into the fashionable world of high society and finally loses all contact with her poor father and brothers, is full of glittering ballroom scenes and picturesque country locations. The colour in these exterior scenes is attractive, and *The Anna Cross* is in general a tastefully decorated film, easily the more entertaining of the two. Performances are more suited to the medium, though one could wish for more subtlety and penetration from A. Larionova, who plays Anna. As with many Soviet costume films, an authentic period atmosphere is sustained and the minor characters, shrewdly observed, are played with enjoyable gusto. The toadying bourgeoisie of the times, and the foppish court, are gently satirised; if there is any bitterness, it is reserved for the climax when Anna rejects her family for her newly discovered life of leisure.

As examples of contemporary Soviet film-making, both productions clearly illustrate the creative *malaise* of the postwar period. The director is no longer the dominating figure in the production team, and in fact a genuinely original or personal response to material is rare. There is little style or imagination in the construction of these films (*The Anna Cross* is marred by crude continuity devices such as swift wipes to divide one scene from another) and the editing is often rough and badly judged. This reliance on theatrical subjects and the non-appearance of new writers and directors of note can be numbered among the chief causes of the present situation. It is much to be regretted that neither Dovzhenko nor Donskoi appears to have made any films for the last five or six years; they are, now, the only survivors of the great Soviet tradition, and one hopes at least that their influence as teachers and advisers may yet bring about a much-needed renaissance.

JOHN GILLET.

DRIVE A CROOKED ROAD and PUSHOVER

The business of making a start does not get any easier as film-making becomes more and more expensive, more cluttered with new techniques, with lavishness of display increasingly a *sine qua non* of commercial distribution. This is one reason amongst the many which make one regret the threatened passing of the modestly budgeted, unassumingly intentioned American feature. What young director can hope to learn his job making spectacles in CinemaScope?

Going to the cinema nowadays is apt to be like dropping in on a freak show. *Drive a Crooked Road* and *Pushover* (Columbia) are reminiscent of the good old days, when one could visit the local in the expectation of seeing a story told in pictures, black and white and incisive, aiming simply to please. And in addition, these two good melodramas, neither of which managed to get a Press show in this country, are both the work of a new director. For the discovery of Richard Quine (who seems hitherto to have been confined to working on rather

inferior musicals) we are really indebted to that anonymous reviewer in "The Monthly Film Bulletin" who spotted *Drive a Crooked Road* and awarded it a Class One rating—Good (of its kind): "Exciting, neatly directed crime story . . . full of atmosphere." All these things are true: would that such virtues were commoner. Many must have been the people who, accidentally taking in the second feature when they went to see *Father Brown* at their nearest Odeon, found themselves continually surprised by its bite and intelligence, entertained by its ingenuity and good story-telling. Two well-classed, spoiled young men plan to rob a bank; the success of their plot depends on a lightning escape down a twisting, potholed road; and they need an expert driver for the getaway car. It is a promising situation, and the development does not let it down, but the film's great merit is that it becomes less a melodrama of speed and violence than a study in relationships: the wretched pair of criminals, conceited and unscrupulous, and their dupe, a lonely, frustrated young mechanic living only for his dream of driving in the big road races, seduced into the conspiracy by the staggeringly attractive girl friend of one of the two thieves.

The story of deception and cruel disillusion is very well told, lifted continuously away from the conventional by the care which has gone into making its people real. The two criminals are characterised with some subtlety (overtones of *Rope*) and excellently played by Kevin McCarthy and Jack Kelly, while Mickey Rooney makes their pathetic victim an oddly vivid and disturbing person. If only the same standard of performance had been possible in *Pushover*, Quine's next picture, it too might have made an exceptionally satisfactory entertainment. This is a *Double Indemnity*-type thriller, on the currently fashionable theme of the crooked cop; a corrupt middle-aged detective schemes to cheat both the force and the bank-robber he is pursuing by escaping with the proceeds of the robbery as well as with the criminal's young mistress. The intrigue is not always plausibly presented by the script; but the film is principally weakened by Fred MacMurray's passionless performance as the detective, and the inexperience of Kim Novak as the girl. Even so, the qualities of style and atmosphere are there, and *Pushover* remains a better thriller than most.

It is early days yet, of course, to speculate on the direction in which Quine's talent is likely to lead him. The common themes of crime and deception, the isolated hero and the compromised love in these two films may be coincidental; but the sympathy with which they have been treated is obviously not. They are not merely "well directed" films; there is a wry, disenchanted, rather sad quality about them which betrays the presence behind the camera of an individual, a human being, and a sensitive one. We can only wish him luck—and watch out for him.

LINDSAY ANDERSON.

THE DIVIDED HEART

This film raises an insoluble problem: how to dramatise the true story of people who are still living? The immediate virtue of *The Divided Heart* (Ealing Studios-G.F.D.) is that its material is so obviously drawn from life, but the defect is that, once the situation and the predicaments are stated, deference, conscious and unconscious, for the people involved takes the edge off pity and anger. And in the end, deference—with its inevitable softening, even sweetening effect—proves very damaging to a story as bitter as this.

The claims of the two "mothers" of Toni, the film makes clear, must to each of them seem unanswerable. Sonja (Yvonne Mitchell), the real mother, a Yugoslav who lost her partisan husband and her two other children during the German occupation, and was then sent to Auschwitz, is left a lonely and pathetic widow, haunted by the past, with only one hope: to find her son. Inga, the German foster-mother (Cornell Borchers), herself unable to bear children, legally adopted the lost and terrified child when he was two years old, cared for him and brought him up to happiness as her own son in the hard years when her husband was a prisoner-of-war in Russia. When Sonja brings her case, the judges cannot arrive at a unanimous decision. "This is a case where justice cannot be done," one of them remarks, and by a majority vote Toni goes back to his real mother, who needs to be placed in his custody, it is suggested, as much as he needs to be placed in hers.

No doubt the audience feels, somehow, that this is the "right" decision. But it is a measure, unfortunately, of the film's underlying weakness that it contrives to show the verdict in the light of a "happy" ending, whereas in fact any ending to this story is a tragic one. More pain and more bitterness must have been involved than is implied here. Interviewing the people concerned before writing his script, Jack Whittingham remarked that the foster-mother, though reconciled to the court's decision and bearing no rancour against the real mother, will never recover from the loss. Yet, after showing something of Inga's hysterical and desperate reaction to the threat of loss, writer and director switch their emphasis at a crucial moment to the real mother: this moment, with all its implications of unbearable anguish when Toni leaves for Yugoslavia, is smoothed away for a last scene with too easy hints of an ultimately happy future for Sonja and her son.

The results of deference, perhaps, are most visible here. Such a moment would have been ugly and difficult; but to escape it is to underplay a vital issue, the inescapable cruelty contained in the situation itself. Whittingham and the director, Charles Crichton, while realising the ready emotional appeal of their subject, and stating the predicament with a clarity and directness that make it very real, then blur the characterisations of Sonja and Inga with their anxiousness to make the grief on both sides appear equally sympathetic, equally reasonable. But a point is reached when more has to be said than "how very sad and difficult this is for both of them"; and the film does not go beyond it. In Sonja's case, too, time is expended on a reconstruction of Yugoslavia under the Nazis—which, for all its discretion, lacks the fresh human comment that alone would justify putting this kind of thing on the screen again. The narrative style is also at its weakest here; Crichton has a firm, solid competence, but it is not sufficiently personal or inventive to sustain such an even, deliberate pace.

When it examines the child's point of view *The Divided Heart* often makes its points more sharply. Some of the incidental scenes—Toni's apparent indifference when the situation is first explained to him, contrasted with his inarticulate panic when questioned by the judges a few days later, his schoolmates who sense an intruder when Sonja arrives to visit him and pelt her with snowballs—create a definite impact, and their quality is partly due, perhaps, to Richard Hughes, whose "story contribution" is acknowledged. For the rest, honesty of intention is inhibited by a too negative kind of tact, and of the players it is only Yvonne Mitchell whose emotional reserve really does suggest an interior depth equal to the subject.

GAVIN LAMBERT.

"The Divided Heart." Cornell Borchers, Geoffrey Keen, Yvonne Mitchell, Armin Dahlen.

IN BRIEF

HANSEL AND GRETEL (R.K.O.). Michael Myerberg was an *entrepreneur* of considerable experience before he became associated with Walt Disney on *Fantasia*. His experience in the cinema and theatre launched him on a Craigish quest for the "exemplary actor"—a quest unsatisfied by the cartoon film, for he found "the technical restrictions of the cartoon method limit artistic imagination—the details of characterisation and the extent of movement and dramatic action are circumscribed." He devoted fifteen years and a great deal of money to the development of a stop-action puppet technique, using dolls—unattractively called *Kinemins*—articulated by remote electronic controls.

The first film to use these methods is *Hansel and Gretel*, a fairly straight adaptation of the Humperdinck operetta, directed by John Paul, and photographed by the well-known American still photographer, Martin Mukasci. The adaptation is by Padraic Colum; the dolls are designed by James Summers, the decors by Evalds Dajevskis. The system of animation is certainly the most satisfactory yet developed. Its weakness is mainly that the dolls' range of movement and expression is so complete that they almost appear as a mere alternative to human actors; there is no scope for the suggestive stylisation of, say, *Zanzabelle à Paris*. Myerberg's own answer to this is, "How many years would it have taken me to cast *Hansel and Gretel* ideally, as I have done, with human actors?"

This is defensible. The operetta is ideally cast, and the voices of the singers are perfectly matched to their physical interpreters. Anna Russell's reading of the witch, as a crazed old flirt, is notably good, and the characterisation of the other roles is impeccable. The design of the figures, and, more especially, of the sets, is unadventurous, and does not rise above the traditional, Germanic, realist style of children's book illustration. At one point a superimposed angel choir recalls—unwelcomely—a Bamford picture postcard.

Myerberg and his *Kinemins* are not likely to rest here, however. His future plans include a studio in this country—whose craftsmen he greatly admires—and productions of *The Pied Piper of Hamelin* and *Macbeth*, for which he thinks Epstein might be a suitable designer. But he is still faced with the old problem of the puppeteer: even more than the fallible, human actor, the "exemplary actor" demands the support of the exemplary producer, the exemplary director and the exemplary designer.—David Robinson.

THE LITTLE FUGITIVE—The Abstract, the Symbolist-Subconscious and the Sociological-Preachy have so far monopolised the talents of American non-professional film-makers in recent years that *The Little Fugitive* (United Artists), whose chief virtues are simplicity of treatment and directness of response, must be welcomed, if only for the makers' choice of theme. Ray Ashley, Morris Engel and Ruth Orkin, the joint directors, have set out to record the joys and agonies of a little



urchin's twenty-four-hour spending spree on Coney Island. Their star, Richie Andrusco, an intense, melancholy little seven-year-old with a disarmingly toothless smile, was, one guesses, given the minimum of direction compatible with keeping him in the frame of the picture. We see him engrossed in a giant ice-cream; astride a fiercely shaking mechanical rocking horse; enjoying the cowboy pony rides; desperately trying to make contact with the shower of baseballs hurled at him in a sideshow cage; and so on. All this is beautifully caught, funny and touching—unmistakably the real thing.

When the directors come to tack a beginning and end on to this material, in order to provide a dramatic pretext for it, they are notably less at ease. Their inexperience has made them force some artificial dramatic effects, and their success with some of the other boys in the story is rather hit-or-miss. There are, too, some attempts to make beautiful pictures of some of the shots (one of the directors is a photographer by profession) which do not mix with the roughnesses of the unrehearsed material. In the end we are left with a wonderful selection of animated snapshots of a little boy which, unilluminated by the story which surrounds them, remain as delightful as the pictures in a friend's family album but, also, as ultimately unrevealing. —Karel Reisz.

WINDFALL IN ATHENS (*Gala-Cameo-Poly*), the first Greek film to be shown in London, combines very palatably some unfamiliar and some conventional flavours. The unfamiliarity is in the setting—a wholly attractive view of Athens, not as a city dominated by antiquity, but as a gay and sunlit background to an inconsequential story, all coincidences and misunderstandings, about a stolen lottery ticket and the battle for the lottery prize between a shopgirl and a young man who sings in a nightclub. Though the film is derivative in outline, the story owing something to *Antoine et Antoinette*, the treatment at times echoing *Domenica d'Agosto*, the director, Michael Yannis, has a gentle, likeable sense of comedy, and the ability to put a human relationship simply and unassumingly on to the screen. A serious subplot—the girl calls in a middle-aged lawyer with an inordinately jealous wife—takes him briefly outside his happiest territory, which is the light, almost airy observation of everyday life. Technically, *Windfall in Athens* has the sort of rough edges that one would expect from a picture made on a low budget in a country scarcely experienced in film production. There is nothing rough, though, about the playing: Helle Lambetti gives an engagingly spirited performance as the volatile heroine, and is supported with good-humoured ease by Dimitri Horn (her rival for the lottery ticket) and George Pappas (the lawyer). The film owes a good deal to its setting, and to the unfamiliar attraction of the light and

liquid Greek voices. But the fragile charm which it brings to fundamentally conventional material derives for the most part from the director's obvious affection for his subject.—Penelope Houston.

It is clear from **NEW FACES** (*British Lion*, directed by Harry Horner) that intimate revue in America has followed the same main lines as in England; and that, by and large, the tone is no longer as fresh and provocative as it was ten years ago. Thus in presenting such a revue in CinemaScope, colour and the Wonder of Stereophonic Sound, in what is practically a straight record of the show (a minimal "will the testy backer come through with the money?" linking tale happily takes up very little time), some of the old theatre conventions are unfavourably exposed. But, though the dancing is of the changeless order of intimate revue, and the decor is not very distinguished, among its cast of unknowns some players and material of brilliance emerge.

The most successful element in the writing is an all-American mixture of gruesome horror and great good fun, which at the moment of impact turns what should, by all the laws, be a scream of terror into a roar of delight, by its rollicking anarchic gusto. Of this order is the Lizzie Borden number ("You can't chop your mother up in Massachusetts"). A performer to whom this genre is as mother's milk is Paul Lynde; whether as an affable explorer exhibiting a scrap of material (the remains of his wife after a jungle encounter), or as an ageing crook bewailing—with the almost equally brilliant Alice Ghostley—their son's failure to lead an unhealthy, vicious life, his playing is terrifyingly and hilariously true. Of the others, Eartha Kitt, a relentless personality-seller with no time for interpretation, sings of mink and Cadillacs; Robert Clary, a young Frenchman of charm and talent, is given mainly poor material; and Ronny Graham is not quite subtle enough to deserve the enchanting number, "Take off the Mask."—Derek Prouse.

THE BAREFOOT CONTESSA (*United Artists*). Joseph Mankiewicz, one begins to think, looks on a film as a sort of expanding suitcase; he throws in statements about society, sex, the law, medicine, the theatre, the cinema, the rich and the very rich as though his main concern were that nothing, ever, should by chance be left behind. *All About Eve* was slick, smart but over-loaded; *People Will Talk* was mostly over-loaded; and in *The Barefoot Contessa* the suitcase has split wide open under the strain. Stated directly, which is far from being Mankiewicz's way, this is a story of a girl from the slums of Madrid who becomes a Hollywood star, remains aloof from the wealthy men who delight to be seen in her company, and feels "safe" only with her shoes off in the dirt—less metaphorically, in a series of furtive affairs with a guitarist, a gipsy and a chauffeur. When she does fall in love—with an oppressively aristocratic Italian count—it is to discover that her husband is impotent as a result of war wounds. And so on, to the heroine's violent death, and back again to the beginning, to a funeral in the rain, in a cemetery dominated by a larger-than-life statue of the loquacious Contessa.

Mankiewicz, whether to circumvent censorship or to show off a natural talent for obscurity, has buried this fundamentally novelettish story in an immense cocoon of verbiage. Three actors (Humphrey Bogart, as an ex-alcoholic making a comeback as a film director, Edmond O'Brien, as a sycophantic press agent, and Rossano Brazzi, as the last of the Torlato-Favrini's) share the sizeable chore of narration; there are flashbacks, and a flashback within a flashback; there are over-charged pauses, enigmatic exchanges, ornately implausible wisecracks. Mankiewicz, it gradually becomes apparent, thinks very little of Hollywood, the Riviera and the millionaire class; he takes a side-swipe at American mother-worship; he finds human relationships strange and complicated. But the film has a vulgarity that deprives its considerable pretensions of any approach to grandeur. And as the story garrulously uncoils its prodigious length, curiosity—for at least the opening scenes have a certain bizarre appeal—gives way to boredom, boredom to near-stupefaction. Humphrey Bogart plays with stalwart determination as the perennial Hollywood philosopher, ruminating through an alcoholic haze; and Ava Gardner, called on to personify Cinderella, a symbol of desirability, a magnificent animal, and all the rest of it, affects an elegant, undaunted, impassivity.—Penelope Houston.

"Windfall in Athens." Helle Lambetti.



THE SIGNS OF PREDICAMENT

Gavin Lambert



Visconti's "Senso." The Countess (Alida Valli) discovers her lover (Farley Granger) with a new mistress (Marcella Mariani).

IN December, 1952, I wrote some notes on the Italian cinema for SIGHT AND SOUND, and these already were a kind of sequel to a longer exploration of the postwar renaissance. They were written a few months before seeing *Umberto D.*, and with this, the finest film of the whole movement, the movement itself seemed practically at an end. Since that time, the structure of the Italian industry has gradually changed. With the institution of a government film bank (established in 1949) which may advance up to 60 per cent of a film's total cost, and the creation of a special fund whereby 10 per cent (and an additional 8 per cent for films considered by a special committee to have exceptional technical value) of the total entertainments tax paid by an Italian film is remitted to its producer, annual production has tripled since the days of *Open City*, and Rome, as Orson Welles remarked, has become "a small Hollywood." With all this one should not, perhaps, have been unduly surprised that the recent Italian Film Week in London differed from its predecessor in emphasising commercial productions and excluding works by some outstanding directors. No de Sica and Zavattini, that is to say, no Visconti, no Castellani; nothing even from Lattuada, Rossellini, Antonioni, de Santis; of newcomers, only Fellini, over-represented by two films. That some of the best talents had nothing ready partly accounts for this—but only partly. To some extent it was a true reflection of the actual state of the Italian cinema.

How are we to analyse this state? Background information is incomplete; but it can supply some disturbing inferences. One had, for some time, heard rumours that the Italian Government disapproved of neo-realist aims, that indirect pressure was being applied; there were the stories of films—*Umberto D.*, *Cronache di*

Poveri Amanti, *Senso*—submitted to international festivals and then deliberately played down by the national delegation. Notable, too, is the remark by Alberto Moravia quoted in an interview in *The Paris Review*: "The writer has nothing to fear. He can publish whatever he wishes. It's those in the cinema, and in the theatre, who have it bad." In the same way, an open letter from Andreotti—under-secretary to the Prime Minister's office—to de Sica, published in the Press after the Italian premiere of *Umberto D.*, makes one official attitude clear: "We ask the man of culture," Andreotti wrote, "to feel his social responsibility, which should not be limited to description of the abuses and miseries of a system and a generation. . . . If it is true that evil can be fought by harshly spotlighting its most miserable aspects, it is also true that de Sica has rendered bad service to his country if people throughout the world start thinking that Italy in the middle of the 20th century is the same as in *Umberto D.* . . . We beg him never to forget this small duty of healthy and constructive optimism, which really encourages humanity to move forward and hope."

II

One must remember that the neo-realist director is exposed to the worst of both worlds. His films have never enjoyed much commercial success in his own country, and they have to contend now with stiffer and more widespread opposition from a growing industry that favours spectacular co-productions, expensive but dreary, with French and American funds involved. Commercially, then, he has become an uninviting risk; and politically, his habit of acute social observation can incur official disapproval. "The keenest necessity of our time is *social attention*," Zavattini has written, summarising the neo-realist creed. "When anyone (he could be the audience,

the State or the Church) says 'STOP the poverty,' i.e., stop the films about poverty, he is committing a moral sin. He is refusing to understand, to learn. And when he refuses to learn, consciously or not, he is evading reality." The greatest social reality for neo-realist directors has been poverty and its causes; the same moral attitude is behind the films Zavattini wrote for de Sica, behind *La Terra Trema* and *Senza Pieta*, *Cronache di Poveri Amanti* and others. In the increasingly wintry climate of a cold war, the dread charge of being communist is not surprising, and when we read in the *Motion Picture Herald* (April 10th, 1954) that Italian film producers have established a voluntary self-regulating code, appointing a committee to which scripts will be submitted in advance, the comment that this is designed to combat "Communist infiltration" immediately follows. The same sentiment is echoed in *The Rome Daily American* a few days later. What may be less generally known is that the news of the establishment of this code was at once cabled by Eitel Monaco (head of the Italian Producers' Association) to Martin Quigley Jr., editor of the *Motion Picture Herald*, in these terms: "Having just succeeded in instituting within A.N.I.C.A. a system of producer control over motion picture production I recall at this auspicious moment meetings we had in Rome in 1945 when together you and I formulated the general provisions of such a production code." The code, in fact, was modelled on the existing American one and originally sponsored by Mr. Quigley, as his paper announces. Its practical influence remains to be seen.

With the Italian industry now making a bid for overseas markets, in America particularly, the growth of this kind of apparatus may seem familiar enough. On this level, nothing in the cinema is ever simple; but pressures are none the less real for being indirect or "voluntary." When Visconti or de Sica have to abandon a project, as they have done during the last two years, for lack of financial support, the reasons are not simply commercial nor simply political. They are, shall we say, an *ad hoc* mixture of both: neo-realism doesn't suit the commercial book, but



Valentina Cortese as the prostitute and Renato Rascel as her humble admirer in "*La Passeggiata*," directed by Rascel from Gogol's story, "*The Nevsky Prospect*."

when a script is unable to find a producer and subsequently languishes, there is no doubt at least a sigh of relief in some political quarters.

III

Umberto D., the old pensioner who can see only the choice of suicide or the solitude of beggary in his life, is, like the Joad family in their pathetic flight from the dust-bowl, one of the cinema's most powerful symbols of the rejected and oppressed. I must, incidentally, disagree with something that Karel Reisz wrote about the film in *SIGHT AND SOUND* a year ago. It cannot, he remarked, "be regarded as a work of that ultimate austerity which Zavattini demands from a neo-realist film" because its story is loosely dramatised, it moves to a climax. Only, he continues, in its "continual emphasis on dramatically irrelevant detail" does it come close to Zavattini's ideal. This, surely, is the exact opposite of Zavattini's intention, which is to find dramatic relevance in detail that others might dismiss or fail to notice. It is his claim that an "unlimited trust in things, facts and people" can disinter from reality an amount of human detail which becomes, viewed in a certain light, immensely dramatic. The moment when Umberto has taken a taxi to the pound to search for his dog is a fine example of this. Umberto has no change with which to pay the driver; he asks some stallholders in the market outside the pound for change, is refused, and has to buy a tumbler he doesn't want in order to change his note. He throws the tumbler in the gutter and pays the driver. This trivial but, for the moment, agonising interruption, when Umberto is doing something on which his whole life seems to depend, is most tellingly imagined.

Life, besides, has its drama and its climaxes; the alternative to what we call fiction is not necessarily a kind of reportage. What de Sica and Zavattini tried to do in



Spectacular song and dance: a scene from "*Carosello Napoletano*."



"I Vitelloni." The touring revue: the old actor (right) intones a *Fantasy of Youth*, aided by the Girls.

Umberto D. was to eliminate any moment of false drama, of false climax, that the conveniences of fiction might have tempted them to impose on their subject. The result is a film of rare and profound purity. *Umberto* is not an immediately lovable, immediately charming old man; he has an aloof dignity and pride, and by the end his situation excites one's pity all the more. The little maidservant, not certain whether she is pregnant by the soldier from Naples or the soldier from Florence, is illiterate and shameless; she has apparently no regrets, no aspirations, she is what she is, and again seems more pitiable as a result.

With this film, de Sica and Zavattini shifted their attention from the poor who are young to the poor who are old; and in this way, too, *Umberto D.* would seem to represent the end of one line of development. Its financial failure, and the curious fact that it seems to have been met with general critical indifference except in England, did them both professional damage and drove de Sica to the misadventure of *Terminal Station*. But, this apart, the film suggests a full stop, the end of a paragraph in their partnership. In the treatment of *Umberto's* landlady and her circle there are echoes of the earlier social satire of *I Bambini ci Guardano*; but otherwise the tone is uniformly harsher, graver, the view of human solitude more final.

As for *Terminal Station*, the film that emerged was to all purposes a Selznick film made in Italy, with reality, as Zavattini would say, "unnaturally filtered," and the human situation lost in the contrivances of magazine fiction. It is good news that, in spite of pressures, Zavattini and de Sica—after de Sica has finished what is apparently a lightweight realistic film, *Oro di Napoli*, based on Marotta's stories—are to work together again. "In most films," Zavattini wrote in *Some Ideas on the*

Cinema, "the adventures of two people looking for somewhere to live, for a house, would be shown externally in a few moments of action, but for us it could be the scenario for a whole film, and we would explain all its echoes, its implications." This is precisely the subject of their next film, *The Roof*.

IV

One obvious result of the present situation is that neo-realist directors, faced with difficulties in an honest approach to contemporary subjects, should explore the past; not as a means of escape but as a means of discovering in it some valuable contemporary references. The most notable example of this has been Visconti's *Senso*.

The subject is taken from a short story by a minor 19th century writer, Camillo Boito. The action occurs in the 1860's, during the Risorgimento, and tells of a passionate and disastrous love affair between the Countess Livia (Alida Valli), while her husband is away at the war, and a dissolute young Austrian officer (Farley Granger). She gives him money to buy a false medical certificate and exempt himself from further service, but when she discovers he has been deceiving her, betrays him to his commander as a deserter and is able to watch his execution with a twisted erotic satisfaction.

Visconti's adaptation of this material (with the script-writer Suso Cecchi d'Amico) is in itself fascinating. While preserving most of the story's externals, he has expanded them in a manner almost worthy of Stendhal, using the lovers' intrigue as a comment on a historical epoch, involving it more directly with actual events. Broadly, he contrasts an unprincipled, decadent aristocracy with the positive optimism of the Italian patriots. He adds the character of Ussoni, Livia's cousin, leader of a group of patriots secretly waiting to link up with Garibaldi in northern Italy; and it is money which Ussoni has entrusted to Livia for the patriots' cause which she, conscience completely overthrown by her infatuation for Franz, gives to her lover for his false certificate. The end of the story is correspondingly enriched. When Franz deserts her, Livia goes to Verona to search for him, not even waiting to hear



"Amore in Città." One episode of this film sketchbook is "Dancing Astoria" (directed by Dino Risi), a reportage on a dance hall.

the outcome of the momentous Battle of Custoza, in which the Hapsburg troops defeated the patriots. She finds Franz living in drunkenness and squalor with a prostitute. Surprised by her, he indulges in an outburst of unrepentant self-pity; they are both, he says, victims of a collapsing system, both witnessing the disintegration of their world. After denouncing him, Livia goes into hysteria and madness. She is running aimlessly, distractedly, through the streets of Verona, crying out Franz's name as he faces the firing squad.

There is much that is brilliant in the film. The whole historical reconstruction, lucid, alive and direct; the settings and the superb Technicolor photography (begun by G. R. Aldo, killed in an accident during the film, and finished by Robert Krasker) go far beyond the tasteful imitation of Old Masters in *Romeo and Juliet* to a genuine, highly refined re-creation of place and period. The course of Livia's affair with Franz is subtly and grippingly followed, and its implications certainly emerge as Visconti intended; and Valli gives a remarkable performance, both credible and frightening in the stages of decline.

The flaws, however, are serious. The figure of Ussoni is wooden in the writing and the performance (Massimo Girotti), and as a result there is no contrast on the human level between the members of the Risorgimento and Livia and Franz. Also, for Franz himself Visconti miscast Farley Granger, who is particularly shallow and theatrical in the later scenes. The film remains to a certain extent lopsided. The Battle of Custoza is in itself a sequence of impressive virtuosity, but it confirms the impression that this part of the story makes only a generalised impact. Through the lack of a positive individual characterisation among the patriots, "history" is too much the impersonal background to a particular story, instead of the story and "history" being caught up together on equal terms. One feels that the Risorgimento element is only intellectually realised; Visconti has given the whole of himself only to the aristocrats, to Livia and Franz. There is enough, of course, to make *Senso* a film of great and original distinction; but, although its conception is clear, the realisation of it is incomplete.

V

The case of Castellani's *Romeo and Juliet* parallels *Senso* so far as it shows another director of contemporary subjects going back to the past, but in other ways the parallel is misleading. Castellani's best films—*E' Primavera*, *Due Soldi di Speranza*—were neo-realistic in method and sympathies, but they contained little that was socially controversial. He has never been an innovator, and his work suggests he would not like to be considered as a moralist. The descriptions of peasant life in his films are earthy and immediate, accepting conditions for what they are and dismissing "society" with a shrug. From this point of view, he can hardly have been faced with the same problems as some of his colleagues; and *Romeo and Juliet*—which he was encouraged to attempt, perhaps, by the general climate of co-production—appears on the surface a promising subject for him; for, like his two previous films, it is firstly a story of young love.

Perhaps, with all its faults in relation to Shakespeare's play, the impression that *Romeo and Juliet* leaves is still of a handsome academic essay. One might forgive the miscasting, the violent textual caprices, if one felt they served a cause—even the cause of Welles' *Macbeth* and *Othello*, of "cinema." But no conception, in any positive sense, emerges; and the lack of distinct innovation in Castellani's previous work, vital and attractive as it is, may have a bearing here. The shortcomings of the film might, nearly all, be those of a stage production. The Romeo (Laurence Harvey) is an over-emphatic, under-equipped actor whose performance amounts to little more than a series of hackneyed mannerisms; the Juliet (Susan Shental, a non-professional and Castellani's one piece of type-casting) is incongruously blonde and cool, with an unschooled eagerness more naturally appealing but simply unequal to the demands of the part. The rest of the cast fails, mainly, to get beyond the repertory stereotype. Castellani has not realised, it seems, that *Romeo and Juliet* is a delicate, intense fairy-tale play, with all the magic, all the cruelty, the lyricism and arbitrary finality of a fairy-tale. "These violent delights have violent ends." To alternate a formal technique with stretches of "neo-realistic" local colour is to break the mood, snap the stem of its poetic method. An extended prologue in Verona's market place, busy ragged crowds muttering interpolated dialogue about the feuding Capulets and Montagues, long chases and spectacular sword-

play; a ballroom scene (delayed by various announcements as to galliards and other period music danced and sung), which presents the *coup de foudre* between Romeo and Juliet while the latter is engaged in the most measured and stately of dances, reconstructed step by phlegmatic step; Friar John's journey to Mantua and his incarceration in a house of plague which, externalised in detail, only strains a coincidence much better in the play for being reported at secondhand; these things betray an oddly misguided literalness.

In the same way, Castellani's rich use of actual interiors—courtyards, palaces, churches, vaults, in Verona, Venice and elsewhere—is misplaced. They are too authentic. Actors in elegantly designed costumes by Leonore Fini move and speak against walls and frescoes solidly fading and clearly five hundred years older than themselves; and Krasker's Technicolor photography, for all its taste and delicacy, does not achieve more than beautiful pastiche by constantly reminding us of Old Masters. The reminders are obsolete. The film needed settings as boldly and formally designed as those in *Henry V*, the pictures should start and glow, as violent as the lovers' delights and ends. But then it needed a conception to match; and there is nothing here to strike passion, only a sense of commitment to a large impersonal apparatus, which is the last commitment, really, that a film of *Romeo and Juliet* should have.

VI

Among new directors, the Italian Film Week showed us only Federico Fellini; nothing by Carlo Lizzani or Claudio Gora, both of whom have attracted attention in their own country. Fellini has of course been well known for some time as a scriptwriter, working with Rossellini (on *Open City*, *Paisa*, *S. Francesco*, *Europa 51*), writing the original story of *Il Miracolo*; with Lattuada (*Delitto di Giovanni Episcopo*, *Senza Pietà*, and co-directing *Luci del Varietà*); and with Pietro Germi (*Cammino della Speranza*). His two films, *I Vitelloni* and *La Strada*, show the eclecticism that such a career might suggest. Both are original in intention and both fail to make a really personal impact.

I Vitelloni, much the better of the two, has the excellent subject of a group of young wastrels in a small provincial town. The sons of quite well-to-do families, these *vitelloni* are incapable of settling down to a career, accepting responsibilities, and drift through their twenties in aimless camaraderie, having love affairs, loafing in poolrooms and on the wintry beach, getting drunk at the Carnival; in their way they represent a distinct social problem. Fellini's film is light, skilful, ironic, with touches of cruelty that seem to echo Castellani but are more muted, more refined. He concentrates mainly on two of the five wastrels: Moraldo (Franco Interlenghi), clearly an autobiographical figure, who is discontented with his situation and finally leaves the town to seek his fortune in Rome, and Fausto (excellently played by Franco Fabrizi), obliged to marry Moraldo's sister when she becomes pregnant by him, but quite unable to remain faithful to her or support her by working. Fausto's story is the most successful. His succession of jobs, his absurd scheme for vengeance on an employer who sacks him for making love to his wife, his fright when his wife actually leaves him, disappearing with the child, which brings about—for the moment—a change of heart, are shrewdly and sometimes wittily described. These episodes, combined with a sequence of macabre humour (growing out of *Luci del Varietà*, perhaps?—it is quite gratuitously inserted) when another of the wastrels, a would-be author, submits his play to a crumbling and depraved old tragedian visiting the town with a travelling variety show, suggest the level on which Fellini works best: as a light, mordant and detached observer. With Moraldo he fails; the character is flat and colourless, and the sentimental moments—his friendship with a boy who attracts him as an image of the blessed simplicities and innocence of childhood—are strained and false.

In *La Strada* he tries something very different. In form, this story of a dim-witted waif attached to a travelling strong man, a lecherous brute who treats her with indifference and occasional cruelty, and, hearing of her death years later, feels for the first time alone and frightened in the world, is unashamedly picaresque. The way Fellini controls this narrative approach, lets one episode directly succeed another with no concessions to orthodox continuity, is bold and original. In this way the film has a more sustained drive than *I Vitelloni*, which remains a series of uneven sketches; but the material itself is a distressing hotch-potch. More than anything else, *La Strada*

Sophia Loren in de Sica's latest film, "*Oro di Napoli*," sketches of Neapolitan life from stories by Marotta.



suggests a director striving to be a poet when he is not; the insistence on bare and desolate landscapes, the Chaplinesque mime of the waif, the constant intervention of "picturesque" episodes—a village festival on the edge of the marshes, a strange hooded little boy ill in bed in a great deserted room, a religious procession, a traditional Fool from a travelling circus who "understands" the waif—all these reflect Fellini's desire to load his story with atmosphere and symbols of profound meaning. But the "meaning" isn't there. To begin with, the crux of the idea is unconvincing: why should Zampano, the moronic strong man, have his incoherent revelation that man is more than brute years after, when he learns Gelsomina has died? Unmoved by her tragi-comic sufferings, abandoning her when she is ill, he has continued his old life with no sign of interest or involvement in her ultimate fate; and he has, besides, at another time shown complete indifference to death. This apart, the presentation of Gelsomina strikes a consistently false note; as played by Giulietta Massina, undoubtedly a gifted mime but a mature woman, the result is only a sophisticated grotesque of innocence, a clever little goblin masquerading as a waif. Unless one can believe in Gelsomina's innocence and youth, the character is merely pathological.

Perhaps this incongruous sophistication is typical of Fellini. Inventive and versatile, he has an eye for the momentarily expressive image and a gift for atmospherics; but both *I Vitelloni* and *La Strada*, in their different ways, show the limitations of shallowness.

VI

In the work of other directors originally associated with the neo-realist movement, there has been a generally disappointing lack of development. After the elegant promise of *Cronaca di un Amore*, Michelangelo Antonioni declined to the sterility of *I Vinti*, a three-part film on juvenile delinquency with episodes in Italy, France and Britain. Each case is highly disagreeable: a young sex maniac in the Midlands (Peter Reynolds—victim, Fay Compton), a group of middle-class adolescents in Paris who viciously murder one of their friends on a picnic (based on the story of the "J3"), a decadent young man in Rome who gets a thrill out of baseless destruction. The introduction professes serious concern with the outbreak of crime and violence amongst postwar youth, but all Antonioni does is to present his three incidents with the trappings of neo-realism and an absence of comment that makes the final effect as boring as it is gratuitous. It is no answer to a problem merely to show its

symptoms in all their surface unpleasantness, but without any kind of sympathy or penetration. *News of the World* reports are more revealing than this.

Lattuada's latest film, *La Spiaggia*, is set in a fashionable resort on the Italian Riviera, and describes what happens when the guests at an expensive hotel discover that a young woman staying there with her daughter is a prostitute on holiday. Here again the treatment is distressingly flat and superficial; the guests—idle and eccentric rich, grasping and ambitious middle classes—are handled on a level of crude caricature, and a subplot concerning the prostitute's tentative romance with the communist mayor is hardly convincing. *La Spiaggia* is mounted with a care and deliberateness typical of Lattuada (to which some metallic Ferraniacolor does disservice), and illustrates, more sharply perhaps than his previous films, the predicament of a serious-minded director who wants to make realistic films but whose view of life appears secondhand.

In Luciano Emmer's *Camilla*, a young couple in a provincial town grow rich and then lose their money again, all under the eye of a wise and watchful family retainer. It is more plausible than either Antonioni's or Lattuada's film, but also singularly humdrum. A grey correctness hangs over everything; the backgrounds are perfunctory, the characterisations respectably stereotyped. Perhaps the story film is not Emmer's best medium. At all events, his *Picasso*—a long documentary exposition in (this time) excellent Ferraniacolor, analysing the painter's successive stages and influences, beginning and ending with a camera interview at Vallauris—has just the vitality and excitement that his feature films since *Domenica d'Agosto* have lacked. It is, in its field, among the very best art films; an illuminating cinema essay with no attempts to "dramatise" the material.

This account is necessarily incomplete, not only because I haven't been able to see anything by Lizzani or Gora, but because two films associated with Zavattini are also missing from it. The first is *Amore in Città*, a film journal composed of candid camera inquests on city life by different directors: a woman who abandons her baby (Zavattini), a dance hall (Dino Risi), a suicide pact (Antonioni), pick-ups (Lattuada), and so on. The second is a modern adaptation of Gogol's story "The Nevsky Prospect," about a middle-aged teacher with a humble dream of reclaiming a beautiful prostitute, directed by Renato Rascel—who also plays the leading part, as he did in Lattuada's *Il Cappotto*—and scripted by Zavattini and others.

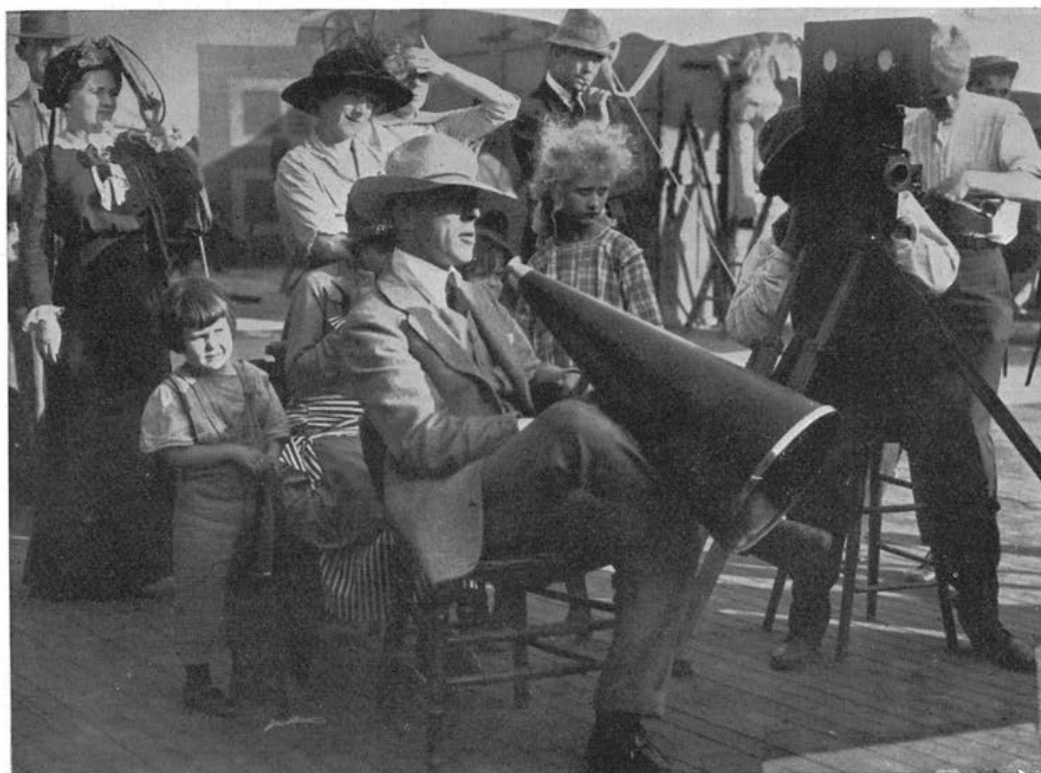
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THE TENTH MUSE IN SAN FRANCISCO

Albert Johnson

San Francisco is as wonderful a place as Cannes or Edinburgh in which to hold a film festival; and a series of lectures and film shows organised by the Museum of Modern Art there has evoked an unusual response from critics, students and cinemagoers, who packed the rather bleak, acoustically forbidding auditorium once a week to hear the rare voices of Hollywood directors talking about films.

It has remained a curiously happy phenomenon that Frank Stauffacher, the enterprising co-ordinator, managed to persuade fifteen directors to face the public. Mamouliau talking about Griffith; Mitchell Leisen discussing de Mille; Zinnemann, Minnelli and Van Dyke talking about their own work—here was a rare opportunity to hear men “on the inside” speak about their problems in the studios, and then, to watch on the screen a representation of their own work, to try and evaluate what “Hollywood” considers film art. An air of informality keyed the proceedings, and the atmosphere seemed to hold promise of minor revelations. In deciding to annotate my impressions of each director—to listen carefully to what was said and, most of all, to regard the evidence more carefully than before—I hoped that some clues might emerge to America’s progress in placing on the screen not only its visions of life and history, but the imagination of its peoples.



D. W. Griffith on location.

April 8th, 1954. Rouben Mamouliau is discussing D. W. Griffith tonight, in the first of the series. I suddenly wish that he would talk about filming some of the Garbo vehicles; and before he says anything I know he will praise Griffith highly. I have often sensed a feeling of remorse in Hollywood, among directors, about Griffith's decline. It is almost undeniable, from the evidence of those who have written about him, that he was very difficult to work with. . . . Mamouliau has arrived, and the audience is enthusiastic. He is quite professorial-looking; artistic, too. He has a long, prepared speech. Here is some of it:—

“Man has not been an incredibly clever and wise being; let us hope that his sense catches up with his scientific wizardry. Films are the most topical and democratic of

the arts, the patrons of films are the people, all the vast masses of the world. . . . What is a director? What does he do? The screen is a synthesis of many arts, and the director is the Mister X of motion pictures, invisible and inaudible. . . . Any art is moulded by its tools, and the essential tool in motion pictures is the camera. The vital appeal is through the pictures, a dynamic series of moving images devoted to a spiritual, an emotional reaction. A director contributes to acting, writing, photography. He translates all the various values into the visible form. One story directed by different directors will give you a completely different picture. . . .

“D. W. Griffith was the spiritual father, the pioneer, the innovator of directors. He was the first man to fulfil all the functions of a creative director. . . . I ask you to

"Intolerance." "A high priest cringing below his idol while far below stretches the greatness of Babylon."



remember any picture you saw recently. When you saw a fade-in, you saw Griffith—when you saw a fade-out, or one image dissolving into another, a vast long shot, a dynamic spectacle, a full or medium shot, when your attention was suddenly brought to details . . . figures silhouetted against the light . . . a halo around the blonde hair of your favourite star . . . you saw Griffith. None of these things was easily realised. A director has to work with many specialised craftsmen, who have to be convinced, cajoled and inspired. It took great courage for Griffith to carry out his ideas. Everything he did was resisted at first, imitated later. At first he made one film a week, he was nicknamed 'Sugar,' then 'Larry' Griffith, and when he signed his third contract with Biograph he became D. W. Griffith. In 1916 he decided to film *Birth of a Nation*, which was to be his greatest achievement. He tackled a Goliath and proved himself a David. . . . It was the first film to charge two dollars admission, and it originally ran for 47 weeks in New York. . . . It also provoked problems about the racial question, which was Griffith's Achilles' heel. The controversies and riotings that resulted, and the beginnings of censorship, caused Griffith to tackle another theme in his next film: the intolerance of man to man.

"The total cost of *Intolerance* was a million dollars. Three hundred thousand feet of film were shot. It took 75 hours to watch. It was shot by Griffith without a script. He thought graphically, transposing direct from imagination to reality. . . . I saw both *Birth of a Nation* and *Intolerance* in one evening. It was an experience not to be forgotten, for I found myself watching the story behind the scenes: the story of Griffith himself. . . . A creative artist is like a tiger in a cage, he can make bars disappear and create a world of his own. It is amazing to see the extent to which Griffith evolved the limitations of his art. The greater the talent, the sharper the impulse to break all chains. . . . The enormous creative urge and agony—like a fierce tiger: what a thrill to watch him tear that cage bar by bar . . . you wonder why the screen does not break. Griffith has become the symbol of imagination, independence, courage—all qualities we sorely need today. We should all be proud that there was D. W.

Griffith—director."

After these glowing words, those of us who had not seen *Intolerance* could hardly contain ourselves. Twenty minutes had been cut from the film, we were informed, but when the lights dimmed and a venerable white-haired old gentleman struck up the slow movement of Beethoven's 7th Symphony (I noticed it was called "musical score for *Intolerance*"), the audience quietened and almost immediately we were living in another age. . . .

Impressions during the film. Here again are the old-fashioned blurbs—"Hatred and Intolerance against Love," with "Certain Ambitious Ladies Banded Together for the Uplift of Humanity" in the feathered, bedecked upper-class drawing-rooms of 1916. Mary T. Jenkins, the matriarchal leader of the do-gooders, is someone who played bit parts later on; I recall her as one of Shirley Temple's evil tormentors in times to come. The audience laughs at the blurbs (especially the one that describes a Pickfordian Mae Marsh as the "Dear Little One"). "Age Intolerant of Youth and Virtue"—Mary T. Jenkins scowling into the camera. . . . Then the story switches to "an ancient people." A busy street in Jerusalem, a grizzle-bearded man chewing, another filing at an anvil, a boy carrying a huge burden in a sack—and then a Pharisee appears, utters a prayer. All activity stops till the holy man has passed. We move to the French court of Charles IX, with its wonderful sets. The screen is filled with vivid details of a magnificently tapestried room. The attention to minute effects, the costuming and arrangement of the whole sequence, does stun the viewer with its authentic look. Two excellent characters catch the imagination of Griffith: the effete nobleman with the black puppies in his doublet, and a little boy, holding a small jewelled cachet, slowly yawns. . . . And then a very young, slender Eugene Pallette appears as Marguerite de Valois' Huguenot lover. . . .

Suddenly back to Mary T. Jenkins again, and her "Uplifters," who are linked in theme with the Pharisees. The Dear Little One is having the time of her life at a millworkers' dance. A Pollyanna in gingham, she leaps about in that inexplicable, senseless abandonment of joy

to which cinema children of the silent era were so addicted. Hoydenish girls flirt with the bosses outside the dance hall, the images jerk and shift across the dance floor, and, ridiculous as it seems, the people are undeniably human beings. Verisimilitude often totters into reality. . . .

Now to old Babylon, the great walls, the palm trees and elephants. Every extra is adorned to the last detail, as if he were personally responsible for looking Babylonian. One cannot help noticing the extras; they act like human beings in an ancient time. So many of them could not be directed specifically by some obscure assistant's assistant. From the first moment of Babylon I am struck with amazement—this ability to catch human beings of a particular civilisation in the listless, unobtrusive movements and postures of just being alive. The screen is shaded off to highlight a high priest cringing below his idol, while far below stretches the greatness of Babylon. Here is Belshazzar's haunted, dead-white face, almost powerfully weak. . . . The audience laughs at the Duncanesque gyrations of the handmaidens of Ishtar. . . .

Back at the mills, Mary T. Jenkins is cutting workers' wages by ten per cent in order to pursue her charity works. The result is a strike. These sequences surely served as the basis for all scenes of labour and mob violence in those Warner Brothers film of the '30's (*I am a Fugitive, Black Fury, They Won't Forget*), as well as for Lang's *Fury*. They capture the raw, sterile look of poverty-stricken frame houses, the workmen's dusty shoes, the waving of arms and brandishing of sticks, and the militia lining up to fire—while the Dear Little One, lovingly shrouded in soft sunlight, gathers wood in a grassy backyard. A cluster of women, strikers' wives, stand on a hillside and look down at the scene, screaming in vain. The President of the mills sits in a very large office with only one small desk. (I thought of *Zéro de Conduite*, in which Vigo has exactly the opposite proportions between the school principal and his surroundings.) The Dear Little One's father is killed in the clash of strikers and militia, and dies to the strains of the second movement from the *Pathétique* sonata.

"Victims of the Jenkins Aspirations" move to the big city, where a petulant young woman, almost pre-Raphaelite in her wan, morbid glances (referred to throughout as "The Friendless One"), becomes seduced by a shady underworld figure ("A Musketeer of the Slums"), and the Boy, who is in love with the Dear Little One, turns pickpocket. These city scenes are pitilessly gloomy, and Griffith developed the style of their images in the Limehouse sequences of *Broken Blossoms*. Every street is joyless, every friend a potential Fagin. The Friendless One is the true heroine of this section, epitomising with grand histrionics the plight of the country girl hardened by industrialism. So, even then, there existed the cinema's misty-eyed approach to the prostitute.

The Babylon story is developing too. In the marriage market, a Mountain Girl in goatskins, hair adorned with flowers, is being auctioned off, but drives her prospective buyer away by chewing onions. Like the Dear Little One, this is a playful character: a sweet unspoiled barbarian, a Barrie heroine in Babylon. A shot of the Love Goddesses, breathing heavily and leaping through water sprays. . . . Women arranged in languorous *tableaux*—it is amazing how bad Griffith's taste can be, even for 1916. . . .

The Christ story and the Huguenot tale are very sketchily done. After the first sequence, the French section has become quite dull, with its obvious contrast of the simple, sweet nobility of religious Protestants and the decadent aristocracy. The build-up to the climax of each story, in fact, is slow, allowing the audience to tire of emotional triteness; and the repeated "symbolic" shot of Lilian Gish rocking the cradle, famous as it is, gradually becomes a source of humour.

The Huguenot story reaches its climax with the St. Bartholomew's slaughter, which is strangely ineffective. But the Babylonian climax impresses, and two sharp visions leap out with grotesque horror: the barbarian who bites into a Babylonian's throat, and a decapitation immediately in front of the camera, which still makes an audience gasp and nervously laugh. The number of extras, horses, the human endeavour and the fire and the clamorous action seem almost too real to be

artificially created. The skies of Los Angeles must have been blackened that day, and watching this sequences convinces one that Hollywood's reputation was made when the extras went home that night to talk for hours of the wonders they had seen. (There are present-day Romans who still talk of *Quo Vadis* in rapt awe.)

An intermission follows the end of Reel 8—the Babylonians victorious—and most of the audience is leaving. The film has already run for an hour and fifty minutes. And by this time, one feels, Griffith himself must have decided to concentrate solely on the Babylon episode. He had suddenly become bewitched by his own magic re-creation of the most opulent civilisation he could ever have imagined. Belshazzar's feast of victory is one of the greatest spectacles ever put on film. For once, Griffith succeeded in giving life to a dream that could not be tarnished by the sentimental lapses of the contemporary story. In no other section of *Intolerance* is there as much sheer directorial achievement and, in fact, reverence, as in the episodes preceding the fall of Babylon.

The city story becomes almost a hindrance, and its development lacks the excitement and imagery of Babylon's fall. The turning of a white sunwheel is seen as through the smoky mists of history as a civilisation crumbles; and here the age of the film shows to positive advantage. The shots of the Mountain Girl in death, like that of Belshazzar and his beloved, are like cinematic etchings. An organ accompaniment tried to add force to the film's final images: a prison riot (as dynamic as anything done recently) is briefly shown, with veiled angels from the heavens causing the pitched battle to cease, the prison vanishing into a field of daisies, golden-haired tots embracing. . . .

The audience applauded lightly. We were all very tired. We were not unimpressed by the grandeur of Griffith, but equally intrigued by the heart of him. Griffith remains an enigma, terribly outdated; I was more than ever convinced that he brought a sense of time and a unique visual scope to the screen, but saddened to realise that this visionary director could not recognise his flaws and could not listen to others. The mystery of the lonely rejected Griffith of later years still haunts Hollywood, and piques the interest of the younger generation. *Intolerance* provided a long look into the past of a slick industry when its edges were rough. It is a greater film than *Birth of a Nation* because of the Babylon episodes, and because it shows Griffith in less angry mood. Still, one wonders how Mr. Mamoulian could have sat through both epics in one evening. A pure work of art can be endured for ever, but so much chaff within the wheat can stifle any appreciation, especially when a question of taste is involved.

II

April 15th. A larger audience tonight, because newspaper publicity has by now reached everyone; Cecil B. de Mille is unable to come, but here is something about him from the programme:

"Mr. de Mille has written the following note for us to use as a general statement summarising his philosophical approach towards the historical subjects with which his name is synonymous:

"The duty of an historian is to give an accurate report of known and proven facts. The duty of an historical dramatist, however, is to fill in the crevasses between them. The absence of legs from both Alexander and his horse Bucephalus in the damaged Pompeian mosaic of the Battle of Issus is no proof that legless men or horses existed. It is for the dramatist to fill in all the missing pieces of the mosaic of history."

The guest speaker is Mitchell Leisen, also from Paramount, who began in films as an art director, and designed the Babylonian sequences for de Mille's *Male and Female*. He has a reputation for slick entertainment because of his keen sense of colour and set decoration (*Lady in the Dark, Kitty, Frenchman's Creek*) and his knowledge of smart comedy timing (*The Lady is Willin', Easy Living, The Mating Season*). The programme note informed me that Leisen's first film for Paramount was *Cradle Song*, a drama about a nun, starring the famous German actress Dorothea Wieck, and brought back to mind the sudden brightness of a childhood cinematic experience. (What happened to Dorothea Wieck? I remember another touching



"The Crusades." "Oaths are sworn, a thousand sword hilts are raised . . ." In background, C. Aubrey Smith as Peter the Hermit and Henry Wilcoxon as King Richard.

portrayal in *Miss Fane's Baby is Stolen*, and that is all.)

Leisen has chosen *The Crusades* (1935) as an example of de Mille's work: a fairly disappointing one, but interesting in the light of the director's comments about dramatic history. He arrives, a florid, sun-tanned gentleman with white hair and an impeccable white moustache, exquisitely tailored, and every inch the Hollywood director. He, too, has a prepared speech, remarking that it is the only way to overcome a kind of "casual terror" at the prospect of giving a lecture. He speaks breezily; he has poise and humour. His job as diplomat for de Mille is perhaps not an enviable one, and he has everyone's warm and sympathetic interest. Here are some of his genial and unassuming comments:

"I insist upon authenticity in costuming—the air of reality must be maintained. I was trained by a pioneer—a legend in my profession. Mr. Cecil B. de Mille, to whom you said Yes because he didn't know how to say No. 'Open and close the Red Sea?' 'Yes, Mr. de Mille.' He was a tough taskmaster—'Bite off more than you can chew, then chew it.' *The King of Kings* was a landmark, a reiteration of the numerous piling-up of details in background and research. . . . But how to film the Crucifixion? How to reconcile the differences of a number of sects? Everyone seemed to be sticking out a tentative toe, hoping for it to be stepped on. There was a great wave of religious bigotry and ignorance to be fought. Just when the Jews felt that the whole mess had been 'forgotten,' here came C.B. bringing it all up again! . . .

"The actors in *King of Kings* had to maintain dignity both on and off the set. It was in their contracts. For the entire duration of the film's making, the Virgin Mary couldn't get a divorce, nor could St. John be photographed cutting up in a nightclub. H. B. Warner was secluded to his dressing-room.

"*The Crusades* exemplifies the picturisation of history. It is really seven crusades rolled into one—history condensed and dramatically rearranged. When I saw the picture again, I was swept away in recollection of that final day of shooting when *King of Kings* was completed and C.B. stepped forward and said to the entire gathering of actors and technicians, 'I'm going to ask the organist to play a hymn in honour of The Man Who was Born to be King.'

"De Mille is a master showman, to whom nothing is impossible. And who can say, too, that he is not great?"

Impressions during the film. Waldemar Young and Dudley Nichols collaborated with Harold Lamb on the script, and, almost from the beginning of the film, the passage of time is

against complete acceptance of it. Here is J. Carroll Naish as a Saracen slave-trader, auctioning off a bevy of studio beauties ("And may Allah give you joy!"), while a bedraggled siren, about to be sold (Ann Sheridan, not yet "discovered"), cries out to embrace a crucifix—"The cross! The cross! Give me the Cross!" Here is C. Aubrey Smith at his most beetle-browed, with monk's robes and a seven-foot staff symbolising indomitable Christianity, marching across half the world to organise the Crusades; the fox-like villainy of Joseph Schildkraut, first detected skulking round a pillar; and that magnificent, sloe-eyed incarnation of cupidity, Katherine de Mille. Henry Wilcoxon, the favourite representative of de Mille's heroes, is here at the peak of his success, an admirable-looking Richard the Lion Heart, complete with leonine features and a swaggering disregard for dignity of behaviour.

It was obviously popular then as now to make historical monarchs assume many of the characteristics and codes of the traditional Western hero. Richard jousts with his followers (including a troubadour, Alan Hale), brags and swaggers, demands that a blacksmith strike him so that he may, when striking back, prove himself the stronger of the two. Of course the monarch sends the giant sprawling. The rollicking mood of these early sequences is clearly designed to give contrast to the picture of a much more serious monarch later embarking upon a religious mission. Already the script is predictable. A minor character remarks that Richard "is headstrong—always fighting—praying to no God," and shortly afterwards the King boasts of the strength of his sword, making this weapon his symbol of belief in human strength. The Hermit's arrival prevents Richard from accepting an arranged marriage with Katherine de Mille's feline French princess; and at once oaths are sworn, a thousand sword hilts are raised by a kneeling crowd of volunteers for the Crusades, and the wily villains, led by Schildkraut, plot over a chess-board for usurpation of the British throne.

A panoramic shot shows the Hermit leading hordes of horsemen, the horses in gold lamé trappings, marching towards Jerusalem; a great unseen chorus bursts into song, the melody martial and the words utterly unintelligible. This sequence projects a dream of the Crusades, none of it realistic, but it captures—if one doesn't think about it—something of the essence, like a grandiose illustration for a black-and-white mural.

Princess Berengaria, a radiant Loretta Young in an exceptionally attractive wig, first appears holding a large basket of flowers, and falls in love with Richard when the Crusaders ride through the town. But she sees Richard strike a man, and decides not to get some of her father's cattle for the army.



'Sentimental haze': troubadour (Alan Hale), dedicated sword and Berengaria (Loretta Young) in "The Crusades".

However, the script manoeuvres Richard into a marriage-by-proxy; it is the only way to feed his army. Loretta Young's performance as Berengaria is peculiarly high-minded and high-handed. She continually seems to be trying to convince everyone in the film that they are not behaving properly. Several long sequences describe unblissful royal domesticity. When Berengaria, trailing lingerie, awaits Richard in his tent on their wedding night, an episode of middle-class medieval humour intervenes. Her father (George Barbier) brings Richard's sword, which the monarch has sent in his place. . . . Even the wedding ceremony (between Berengaria and the King's sword) is given an extra fillip of unintentional comedy: the sombre-faced, hollow-cheeked monk performing the ritual is Mischa Auer, before he achieved fame as a comedian.

The best of these rather absurd scenes is a very brief one during which Berengaria, swathed in black velvet and furs, boards the ship to occupy the royal cabin, only to find Katherine de Mille there, like a high-born Sibyl. It is the inevitable encounter of feminine virtue and villainy, as de Mille usually pictures it. This is very often a matter of hair colour, for the director usually chooses blonde heroines (Madeleine Carroll, Elissa Landi, Gertrude Michael, Betty Hutton, Angela Lansbury) and brunette temptresses (Claudette Colbert, Barbara Stanwyck, Hedy Lamarr, Paulette Goddard). The simple symbolism of a de Mille film can be as maddening as other people's artiness. It would be interesting to compare the faults of *The Crusades* with those of *Alexander Nevsky*, made two years later. In both cases, the presumption of the masses' awareness of history is mistaken, de Mille underrating it, Eisenstein overrating it, on the grandest scale. But the one thing that counts most heavily against de Mille is an undeniable impression of "phoniness." At no point in *The Crusades* is one involved with the perception of real life, re-created but made effectively part of an unattainable, historic past.

Ian Keith's Saladin interestingly portrays an Eastern wit, a friendly enemy. The scene before the Council of Kings, in which the potentate cuts a piece of silk in mid-air with his sword, is an excellent moment of childlike dramatic business, coupling the mystery of the Asiatic personality with wondrous occult feats. The scriptwriters' collaborative imaginations make of Saladin a subtle Moslem ruler whose condescending attitude towards the European invaders unconsciously embodies all those intangible psychological and philosophical barriers between East and West. He is the only really human personality in the film, in spite of an over-glamourised Orientalism which characterises his camp tents, and the exotic drummings and fanfares which herald his entrance into the Council's chambers. In this key-role of *The Crusades*, de Mille seems to realise the fascination of watching evil genius at work; for it is he, more than any other director of spectacle, who demands psychological depth and often eventual pathos for his villains. (Contrast Laughton's Nero in *Sign of the Cross* with Ustinov's in *Quo Vadis*.)

The climax of the film arrives with tremendous battle scenes flaming across the screen after Berengaria and the Hermit are captured by Saladin. The old patriarch is martyred in St. Sebastian style (it takes five stout arrows to silence his stentorian prophecies), and the scenes of conflict are laden with hundreds of horses, thousands of men, too much artillery, cross-bows, balls of fiery oil catapulted into crowds of warriors. These battles are confusingly and unexcitingly done; though they surge with activity, there is no real communication of violence. Everything is too well staged, too remote. The tumultuous battle is followed by momentary victory for the Crusaders, and the famous shot of the soldiers on the steps of a stricken church, in which "the true Cross" has been found. Here again is the dream vision of the director's original desire to make this film synthesised into one vital image. The Cross is not seen; its supernatural rays fall slantingly across the uplifted faces of Mischa Auer's monk and the wounded men, half-dragging themselves up towards the light. The original idea of glorification comes to the fore again, but there is by now a too sentimental haze around this *tableau*.

A second battle scene has a fine moment when the charging armies, storming towards one another on their horses, meet with a sickeningly realistic clash of armour and cries. . . . Richard, defeated in this foray, prays for the first time when he finds his old friend the smith dying on the battlefield. It is Saladin, charmed by his captive Berengaria, who declares peace, strangles Schildkraut, and restores the Queen to a now Christian Richard. The film ends with prayers on a hillside overlooking Jerusalem, medieval choirs framed between white pillars, and Berengaria laying Richard's broken sword on a pillow circled by burning tapers. The militant song of the Crusaders reaches Elgarian stateliness for the fadeout.

The audience mumbled a good deal when it was all over. Most of us not only questioned the film value as "entertainment," but also its worth as art. The lamentable fact is that *The Crusades* is a de Mille failure, and far from containing his best spectacles. The crevasses in its historical plot are abysmally vast, and the dramatic attempts to bridge them fairly childish. How ironic it is that de Mille is not convinced of the changes within his own country's attitude towards entertainment on the screen. One could recognise now, with far greater effect, the sharpness of that scene in *Sunset Boulevard* when de Mille, enacting himself, says to Norma Desmond, "Times have changed . . . pictures have changed," and then turns to his large group of studio technicians, and shouts "Action!" for Henry Wilcoxon, still enacting a swashbuckler.

(To be continued)

A REVIEW OF REVIEWS

John Grierson

I WILL begin with a personal note. But be patient. I do so only to get on to larger matters. Last September brought the twenty-fifth anniversary of the showing of *Drifters* and "the beginning of the Documentary Movement." I put that last phrase in quotes because it is not mine and never was. It was certainly the anniversary of my first film-making, and it has been generously celebrated here and yon and notably by the Edinburgh Festival and the B.B.C.

The personal note is that instead of feeling grateful and gay, as of course I should, I have felt unnaturally depressed and not a little sceptical of the whole affair. Asking myself, as I must, why I feel so scurvy on a complimentary occasion, I can answer quickly, of course, that I don't like being old. But I rather think that it is because I don't like a young art being old. When it is the case of an exploratory branch of the art like Documentary, I do not, in especial particular, like to have it dwelling on the past.

I have thought so not just often, but always. It has been a matter of principle never to see any film I was associated with after it was made and presented. *Drifters* I have never seen yet. I was too scared to see it at the Tivoli—which is another and younger matter—and all I know of it now, except of original recollection, is the excerpt that was dug up for me for the television broadcast. I have felt no loss about this, for Documentary, as I have thought of it, is bound, by definition and of its nature, to record and speak and perhaps make poetry of the living and ever-changing scene.

I know that the Heraclitan river was ever-changing too, but in the first flash of philosophic light was thought also and profoundly to be the same. Form is indeed the continuing aspect of the phenomenal, and it is doubtless right to consider that it has its own record, its own history, and yes, that the life of form has in turn its own form which it is the work of the critic to grasp and reveal.

This I recognise, but only to wonder if the work of making things—and particularly in a medium like Documentary—is best served by this aspect of criticism. When I was in Canada I did something I could never academically justify. I simply prevented the young tyros of the National Film Board from seeing the earlier work of the British School of Documentary; and if they ever saw films like *Night Mail* it was furtively, and perhaps the better for that. I suppose I would do it again, if only to emphasise that their times were new and their horizons different and the character of their inspiration bound, and best bound, to find its own nature.

This is what I have invariably said to the young men who, over the years, have come in from all over the world with the thought that they would learn the art of documentary here and take it back with them. Who was I to pretend to know the nature of their living scene or in

what forms its native character could best be revealed? I have told them that all we could teach was the idea of documentary, and this they could learn in a trice, but the matter of their learning was back home where their people and their aspirations and their battles and their destinies lay.

In the last few weeks, I have had to think much of this dichotomy of critical thought. I have for once seen a lot of old documentary material. How far is it out of date? How far is there something to be seen again? How far is it fit subject matter for contemporary notice? How far has it anything which will help illumine the critical problem of the moment? Well, for one thing, it doesn't seem to me that the young fellows are shooting any better than their elders shot with Devries twenty years ago. They certainly don't shoot so dangerously—meaning that they don't in fact risk their lives any more for a simple visual effect. The war argument is of course out.

Nor is it painful, at least to me, to see the silent cinema trying to say so much silently and having to rely so totally on the impact one can make formally by simply hopping from one sight to another. Call it montage or what you will—that was all it was. Whatever the precious description, I will swear it forced everyone to see more and perhaps more unusually, and that the sheer limitation of silence evoked a sense of visual discovery which is none the worse—as in child observation—for being inevitably naïve. At its best, there is a surprising sense of the kinship of the cinema with the deeper laws of painting which one cannot note so easily now for all the colour, all the art direction, and all the scopes.

One might find likewise, in later phases, and particularly in the earlier experiments with sound (Cavalcanti, Leigh, Britten, Auden, Wright, etc.), a pretty sophisticated appreciation of contemporary effort in the other arts. It makes the documentary of the 'thirties, for all its deceptive anti-aesthetic stand, part and parcel of the whole aesthetic story which the *Spectator* recently has been describing as the Movement. This is as obviously true of the relationships in form as of the relationships in motivation. One piece of *Song of Ceylon*, for example, is Elmer Rice, and I think better. And of course the association with the early work of Auden and Britten is immediate. The basically significant thing was the common effort to find a form in which the multiplicity of voices in a corporate world could find lucid expression and aesthetic significance. The most revealing example—it was made from cut-outs and only offered as an experiment—was certainly *Coalface*.

Interesting as this may be for the historian of aesthetic form, and satisfactory as it may be for all who participated in the exercise, the important factor lies outside this altogether in the life-giving force which made the exercise not only possible but also vivid and worthwhile. I know it was not a reaching for the aesthetic *per se*. I can

remember no one—till much later—going to bed saying "Please God make me an Artist." The anti-aesthetic stand was deceptive because it was deliberately so. When we said "To Hell with Art," perhaps it was because we remembered an older pundit, Middleton Murry, saying "Art is the by-product of something well done." Perhaps also it was because we thought we knew, and better than Middleton Murry, what there was to be done and done well.

We were moved—we of the Movement—by what was happening in the world. We were aware of the economic changes that in turn were creating social changes. It happened that some of us were not only natural radicals but trained ones. However, it never matters for the arts whether one belongs to the big-enders or the small-enders so long as the basic and common concern is with what is really toward. Of course we put the working class for the first time on the screen, but the Tory Elliot—also from the Clydeside—was one's co-conspirator. Of course we went into the question of the agony of the mines and unemployment and the slums, and one of Britten's loveliest pieces, and one of Auden's loveliest lyrics, helped us to say what we saw; but one of our champions in this small matter was a Conservative Chancellor of the Exchequer.

I will not say that it would have happened, or will ever happen for that matter, unless the more radical mind presses articulation on the less. But the point is surely that we were altogether, more or less, over a particular period, in a relative state of lucidity about where the human force was heading. The creative end, of whatever sort, was the more plain to see and the more happy to serve. There was a sort of consequent comradeship in the Arts, not because we knew each other and drank together and yes, believe it or not, conversed together, but because we were all, if a little oddly and differently, like Chaucer's people, travelling on a common pilgrimage.

I know now why I am depressed. I am not depressed because of the record, which will serve very well and the better for being thought of as one contribution among others to a larger affair. I am not really depressed because, abstractly, a young, exploratory art is looking on its past. I am depressed because this exploratory art has lost the particular impetus which makes for exploration.

I do not ask that it should be the self-same impetus as before. That would be politically foolish, for the world forces to be felt and apprehended have obviously changed their pattern. The human problem we could see in immediate and local terms has to be seen now in more distant terms, calling for a power of sympathy which is too much for many. The slums of one's fathers and mothers are strangely different from the slums of Singapore. The artist is apt to say, and rightly enough, that it is always the local scene or nothing. He is obviously hard put to it, here and now in our midst, to say where the depth of local cause now lies. Says Cyril Connolly: "It is closing time in the gardens of the West, and from now on an artist will be judged only by the resonance of his solitude or the quality of his despair."

I listen to them as they justify their whimpering about all things, including especially our going out and about among the people and their problems during the 'thirties. I watch the bright young fellows who are bright about everything except that they have nothing new to believe

in and nothing new to say. I watch them sneer at poor old Spender as poor old Spender now sneers at himself. They will discover nothing, because they are dedicated to the thought that exploration and discovery in the past only discovered a world which somehow swamped their vanities. Even Priestley joins the throng. He can, of course, write them all into a cocked hat. But he is a minor prophet because he is a desperate one. He is worried in the Wilderness, blaming the 'monstrous' machines his own radicalism has created.

But I shall whisper something and it will be the last thing I shall have to say in these articles. The art of criticism in the last resort is to see where, in a particular period, the creative motivation unconsciously lies, and bring it into consciousness. It cannot ever be found negatively in reference to the past, but only positively in reference to the new, because art, like living itself, is a matter of finding the secret of life all over again.

It cannot be concerned with complaint even if, as it happens, the individual for all his generosity of thought does not see his original dream come true. The larger and only dream is with a damn-fool thing called the Human Race. I suspect that, in spite of all the fuss and the bother of bewildered leaders, crazy prophets and lunatic warriors, it is doing very well at this very moment North South East and West, and the very problems it is setting all three is the cheerful proof of it.

There is, I believe, an order to be grasped and an inspiration to be given, and I think it is to be found yes, simply, where the people are and not in the concerns of the orders or individuals who batten on their aspirations, or for that matter are being crushed by their progress. This quite clearly represents more than 90 per cent of our present critical concern. Someone had better look again at the original description of the bourgeois mind and the liberal dilemma. The liberal mind is presently in pain, and one is plagued on every hand by its sense of torture. Cynicism is simply one of its pettifogging disguises. I personally cannot find a tear for it. It was foretold. Is there in this a lead for criticism? By simple process of elimination—of every kind—I think there is.

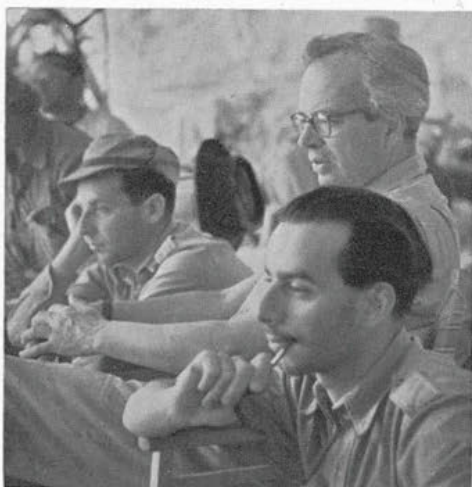
Footnote on Recent Correspondence.—You may have noted a certain amount of brawling in the back alleys of this august quarterly. It was, I am afraid, pitched on too excited and quarrelsome a note for the public exchange. It appears that I started it by talking of the teddy boys of criticism, which shows what a phrase will do. I was, in the result, apparently much righter than ever I expected to be, except that the phrase did invite a smarter and less unhappy answer. Nor am I alone involved. There was a claim to discovery of a lot of important films and people, or at least of having introduced them to this country. I would not for a moment diminish any effort or achievement in that direction, but, on the whole, think that a balanced judgment and considered statement would have found time to share the honour with, let us say, Miss Olwen Vaughan of the New London Film Society.*

* To save correspondence on this subject: three of the twenty-eight films mentioned by Mr. Anderson were first shown in Britain by the New London Film Society ("Los Olvidados," "Farrebique" and "La Règle du Jeu").—Editor.

HA'GIVA

(The Hill)

*Right: the four volunteers on their journey to the border.
Centre: Thorold Dickinson and his two Israeli assistant directors.
Below: evacuation of the Old City of Jerusalem after surrender to the Arabs.
Left, the Misgad Ladach hospital at the end of the siege, and right, a street scene.*



This story of modern Israel was made for Sikor Films by Thorold Dickinson with an Anglo-Israeli unit last year. Five months of shooting included locations in the Negev Desert, in the Crusader City of Acre, on the slopes of Mount Carmel and the Jerusalem hills. Interiors (designed by Joseph Carl, who did the sets for the Glyndebourne *Orpheus*) were built and shot, mainly at night to avoid the daytime heat, in a disused factory near Tel-Aviv. The cameraman was Gerald Gibbs, and the musical score has been written by Paul Ben Haim.

The story by Zvi Kolitz and Peter Frye begins on July 18th, 1948, when a truce in the Israel-Arab war was established by the United Nations. Israeli patrols were despatched to chosen points along the fighting line to ensure the position of the truce boundary, and four young soldiers who volunteer for a patrol—a young Irishman and three Jewish people, including a girl—are assigned to hold Hill 24 until the Truce Commission arrives. The narrative goes back into the past to describe how the characters came to be on this patrol, and evokes a whole cross-section of life in modern Israel.



BOOKS and MAGAZINES

PREFACE TO FILM, by Raymond Williams and Michael Orrom. (Film Drama Ltd., 8/6d.)

So far as it makes a plea for greater freedom of style and expression in film-making, Messrs. Williams' and Orrom's book is certainly to be commended; and as an expression of dissatisfaction with contemporary modes of film-making it may be a sign of the times, voicing a note of wider protest. But two reservations occur almost at once. When this *cri de cœur* is evoked by objective analysis, one cannot go all the way with it; and when it embodies subjective reaction, then the proper substitute for this book is a film displaying the creative processes in which the authors believe.

Preface to Film consists of two essays. The first is aimed to stimulate film-makers' interest in the whole tradition of drama. In actual fact this sharp division between theatre and film referred to by Mr. Williams is not always so obvious; some of the most distinguished film directors have evolved their film ideas from early experiences in the theatre—Stiller, Feyder, Eisenstein, Welles, for example. Nor are Meierhold's *Portrait of Dorian Gray*, Jessner's *Hintertreppe* or Piscator's *Revolt of the Fishermen* altogether undistinguished examples of film-making. It is all to the good, however, that the essay should stress that the cinema cannot exist in isolation, and that criticism should relate films to the general creative spirit of the age.

Mr. Williams simplifies the definition of drama, deals with conventional forms in relation to the structure of feeling of a period, but again in all such theorising on art there is the danger of over-simplification. The individual artist, fortunately, can always upset the apperçus. The subconscious processes of the creative act are not always readily accessible to rational analysis, either on the part of the artist himself or of his critics. If there is a demand for total expression in a work of art there is, it seems to me, a demand for total acceptance on the part of the audience.

In making a plea for integration and style in films, the authors are saying nothing new. They are, too, stating familiar truths when pointing out that novelty and change are not synonymous with progress. This latter theme is currently being aired by Mr. Wyndham Lewis, who reminds us that the artist must never submit to the parochialism of time, and that the absolute value of a work of art overrides all other considerations.

It is interesting to see, by the way, that both authors in this book pay due tribute to the German silent cinema, which many people now regard as *passé*, and which has suffered heavy losses at the hands of social commentators like Siegfried Kracauer.

Mr. Orrom's contribution is a somewhat detailed analysis of film methods. The precise nature of his proposed reforms does not always emerge, and he himself is aware of the dangers in his task when he says, "It is impossible to give a formula for 'synthesis,' for there are no formulas in art: one can only state guiding principles." He seems motivated by impatience with the "rigidity" of the naturalistic film, without being very specific about it, and adumbrates a narrative method to convey which both German expressionism and the work of Gene Kelly are used as pointers. Here, particularly, one feels that only a film embodying these principles would enable one to judge their real value.

In their postscript, the authors regret the lack of opportunity for experiment within the commercial structure of the industry, and rightly claim that art cannot stand still. This is always a defect worth calling attention to, and anyone who now investigates the 1916-26 film period will realise how courage and enterprise made it a truly golden age. The values which made that age will have to be rediscovered by modern film-makers, and this means not the imitation of remote styles but, rather, the creation of new manifestations of the human spirit.

LIAM O'LAOGHAIRE.

NEW YEAR BOOK LIST

A PICTORIAL HISTORY OF THE SILENT SCREEN, by Daniel Blum (Hamish Hamilton, 50s.). An album crammed with photographs of films and stars from the opening of the Kinetoscope Parlor in 1895 to the end of an extraordinary era. The emphasis is heavily on the American cinema; but that is rich enough, and for nostalgia the volume is practically unbeatable. Blanche Sweet, Clara Kimball Young, Francis X. Bushman, Nazimova, Valentino, Lon Chaney, Corinne Griffith, Charles Ray, Keaton, Langdon, Fairbanks and Pickford, Barrymore, Negri, Swanson, the Talmadges, the Gishes, Stroheim, Charles Farrell and Janet Gaynor, Mae Marsh, Alice Terry, early and middle Chaplin, the first Crawford, Garbo, Mary Astor, W. C. Fields, Nils Asther—here they all are, prolifically jostled.

THE CELLULOID MISTRESS, by Rodney Ackland and Elspeth Grant (Allan Wingate, Illustrated, 16s.). A determinedly sprightly account of a checkered career in the British film industry. After trying to break into Wardour Street at the age of thirteen, Rodney Ackland did a stint as a writer at Elstree, co-scripted the original story of Carol Reed's *Bank Holiday*, fought for permission to direct his first feature, *Thursday's Child*, successfully brought a legal action against the company which made *Queen of Spades* for denying him the correct screen credit, and had a hand in founding the New London Film Society. The book contains the customary quota of anecdotes, among the accounts of scripts written and shelved and of projects which never reached the screen. Some of the stories amuse, but any reader who may be put off by the facetious style in still-captioning should be warned that this is in complete accord with the rather arch tone generally adopted.

WHITE HUNTER, BLACK HEART, by Peter Viertel (W. H. Allen, 15s.). Peter Viertel's novel—which has certain affinities with Budd Schulberg's *The Disenchanted*—is the story of a screenwriter, Peter Verrill, who goes to Africa to work on a script with John Wilson, an arrogant, domineering, "brilliant" director whom he both admires and mistrusts. Wilson becomes obsessed with the idea of shooting an elephant ("It's a sin to kill an elephant . . . the only sin you can buy a licence for and then go out and commit. And that's why I want to do it"), he neglects the film, his obsession results in a man's death, and before the end of the book Verrill is rounding on him as a "spoiler," who "leaves everything dead or beaten up in his wake." Very assured and readable, except when Mr. Viertel keeps too closely to the well-worn Hemingway trail, *White Hunter, Black Heart* also has the fascination of the *roman à clef*.

THE EASTER EGG HUNT, by Speed Lamkin (Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 12s. 6d.). A slick, showy Hollywood novel, in which a *Life* reporter observes an ill-fated affair between a producer and an alcoholic blonde, wife of an ageing oil tycoon who has made her a Hollywood hostess and means to make her a star. Mr. Lamkin does quite well with the synthetic gaieties, the carefully cultivated disillusionment, and the name-dropping ("through the efforts of Sam Goldwyn I found a pleasant place to live"; "Grover introduced us to Bette Davis, who seemed quite nice") customary in this genre. But he has apparently set out to write like Scott Fitzgerald, and what begins as a readable imitation ends up by coming dangerously close to an inferior (and rather vulgar) parody.

GROUCHO, by Arthur Marx (Gollancz, Illustrated, 16s.). A biography of this disenchanted comedian by his son contains much that is illuminating in its readable, anecdotal, leisurely way: on the Marx methods of work, the collaboration with Irving Thalberg, Groucho's success on television, and on the "inner" man, shy, insomniac and restless, to whom Chaplin said: "You're the greatest comedian of them all."

THE CHARLES LAUGHTON STORY, by Kurt Singer (Robert Hale, Illustrated, 15s.). An adulatory biography of an actor whose career has been interesting enough to deserve closer and more analytical attention than it gets here. Charles Laughton has played everything from Macbeth to the stooge in an Abbott and Costello picture, and has apparently found his greatest personal satisfaction in his public readings from the classics, and in such experiments as the *Don Juan in Hell* tour. But Mr. Singer, whose admiration for his subject seems almost boundless, never really comes to grips with his qualities and defects as an actor, while the man himself tends to disappear

beneath a snowdrift of enthusiastic adjectives. The book is worth reading for the facts it gives, but even here one should go warily; Mr. Singer attributes M-G-M's *Quo Vadis* to de Mille and, to even things up, gives the Rita Hayworth *Salome* to M-G-M; he seems to assume that Irving Thalberg directed *The Barretts of Wimpole Street*; and he announces, surprisingly, that *St. Martin's Lane* (with Laughton and Vivien Leigh) is "today cited as one of the great pictures in motion picture history."—ERNEST CHIMNEY.

FILMS AND FILMING, edited by Peter Brinson.

Monthly, 1/6d,

FILM, edited by Allan Borshell and Jon Evans for the Federation of Film Societies. Monthly, 1s.

JOURNAL OF THE BRITISH FILM ACADEMY, edited by Roger Manvell. Quarterly.

The emergence of these new film magazines is a welcome sign of revived activity in a field that has for some time lain fallow. The most ambitious of them, *Films and Filming*, is aimed—in the words of its reviewer in *Film*—at the public "that finds *Picturegoer* unsatisfying and SIGHT AND SOUND unintelligible." (We now await the editor who starts a new magazine for those who find *Picturegoer* satisfying and SIGHT AND SOUND intelligible.) The first three numbers of *Films and Filming* have covered a wide range; the articles are usually short and attempt a kind of succinct popularisation—of directors like Sucksdorff, Visconti, Huston, of personalities like Brando, Judy Garland, Norman Wisdom. There are also detailed reviews of contemporary films and of current events like the Edinburgh Festival or the Italian Film Week, and a large number of illustrations.

Film is addressed to a more dedicated public, the members of film societies. In format it resembles its French opposite number (of which the first issue, *Cinéma 55*, published for the *Federation Française des Ciné-Clubs*, appeared about the same time and is well worth reading). The response to *Film*, the editorial of the second number tells us, has been gratifyingly enthusiastic; the first 13,000 printing was quickly sold out, and readers have been prolific with comments and suggestions. The point of view is clearly not going to be too enclosed, for although the emphasis is naturally on films of interest to its particular public, it contains articles and features relating to the film industry as a whole.

The British Film Academy has also published the first issue of its quarterly *Journal* (available free to members, to others by private subscription), which contains a review of *Le Salaire de la Peur*, by Sidney Cole, and articles on Film Music by William Alwyn and on Cinerama by John Halas.—JAMES MORGAN.

POSITIF, September-October 1954: *Aspects du Cinéma Américain*
CAHIERS DU CINÉMA, October 1954: Alfred Hitchcock

The French again. Each of these issues makes a special effort, *Positif* in the name of the American cinema generally, *Cahiers du Cinéma* in peculiar homage to Alfred Hitchcock; it is rather disappointing to have to record that they are respectively rather inadequate and inexcusably bad. For the light they throw on certain vices endemic in French criticism, however, they merit attention.

Positif first, because it is better. A survey of the American social film: an interview with Paul Strand and a long appreciation of *Salt of the Earth*: Zinnemann and Dassin: and a very justifiable smack at *Cahiers du Cinéma* in the shape of a deflation of half a dozen of their pet "cult" directors (Hawks, Ray, Preminger, etc.). Much of this is sympathetic; but one regrets the almost complete absence of humour among these young critics (with the attendant absence of a sense of proportion) and—which is more serious—a consistent inaccuracy and an ignorance of the way films come into being that is only partially concealed by the self-confidence of the writing. A basic weakness in most French writing on the cinema of this kind seems to be this extraordinary unawareness of the fact that films have to be written before they can be directed; that comparatively few American directors have actually conceived the films they have made; that there are such people as producers, who often assign directors to subjects which do not necessarily suit them, but who at their best can exercise considerable creative influence on their pictures. *Julius Caesar* obviously reflects the personality



Silent screen: Norma Talmadge in "Secrets" (1924)

of John Houseman as much as that of Mankiewicz; yet the critics of *Positif* do not even acknowledge his existence. ("En adaptant Jules César, Mankiewicz a choisi la mauvaise formule. . .") The following total comment on the film is also unhappily typical: "Ca et la, Marlon Brando savait la texte de Shakespeare."

Analytical criticism, discussion of a film-maker's personality, is impossible if a good half of the constituent elements of each film is simply ignored. "En adaptant Les Raisins de la Colère, John Ford a edulcoré le roman de Steinbeck. . ." Any estimate of Ford which starts with a confusion as elementary as that is not likely to go far. Similarly, the importance of Laszlo Benedek, honourable and skilful director though he is, is absurdly exaggerated when one assigns to him the entire creative responsibility for *Death of a Salesman*.

All the same, there is much more to be said for *Positif* than for the latest number of *Cahiers du Cinéma*. This magazine seems now to have been almost completely taken over by the covey of bright young things whose eccentric enthusiasms, paraded so generously in recent issues, have already sadly impaired its reputation. Here they are more vociferous and preposterous than ever. To the accompaniment of a ceremonial tattoo of mutual back-slapping, Hitchcock is hoisted into the Pantheon—up there with Murnau, Renoir and Howard Hawks. "Depuis Le Fleuve, Monkey Business et Under Capricorn, le cinéma est entré dans ce que nous pouvons appeler 'la phase de l'intelligence'." Can absurdity go further? The answer is, Yes. In the course of this issue Hitchcock is compared with Dostoevsky, Faulkner, Bernanos, Nietzsche, Rousseau, Hardy, Richardson, Poe (a "classical" poet, apparently), Meredith, Homer, Aeschylus, Corneille, Balzac and Shakespeare. More marvellous still, all this is done on the strength of a handful of Hitchcock's American films, most notably *Under Capricorn*, *I Confess* and *Strangers on a Train*. For those who can view with equanimity this degradation of a fine magazine, there is some amusement to be found in all this, particularly in Hitchcock's own, plainly gleeful reaction to these fantastic accolades. ("Is it true that you don't really like your American films? He smiled as he shook my hand. 'Not really.'") But, strange as it may seem, all this admiration for Hitchcock does not inspire in these critics the slightest interest in his work as a whole; there is not a word in the whole issue on his British films.

Or perhaps it is not so strange. One is driven to the conclusion, paradoxically, that these critics are not really interested in Hitchcock at all. They are above all interested in themselves. While the writing in *Positif*, though rather uncommunicative of enjoyment, is at least honest, the majority of this group of critics now occupying *Cahiers* remind one of that grim remark attributed to Cyril Connolly when encompassed by enthusiasts at some highly charged literary gathering. "It's us they want to see," he said, turning to a fellow-victim, "but it's themselves they want to talk about."—LINDSAY ANDERSON.

CORRESPONDENCE

Salt of the Earth

The Editor, SIGHT AND SOUND

DEPLORE UNPRECEDENTED WITCH HUNT ATTACK IN CURRENT SIGHT AND SOUND UPON SALT OF THE EARTH FILM OF INTEGRITY. URGENTLY REQUEST AIRMAIL ARTICLE TO BIBERMAN, WILSON AND JARRICO FOR EQUITABLE OPPORTUNITY OF COMMENT AND REPLY. SIDNEY COLE.

The Editor, SIGHT AND SOUND

Sir,—The article on *Salt of the Earth* by Pauline Kael must have bewildered many of your readers. As a revelation of a mind more subtle than but basically in tune with McCarthyism it is not without interest, but as an appraisal of an important film it is puerile.

Of course *Salt of the Earth* is controversial. So much so that at least two national newspapers noted for their film criticisms (the *Evening Standard* and the *Observer*) preferred to ignore it; but even so I would have thought that SIGHT AND SOUND would have favoured us with an objective assessment.

"What brought these people together to make a film?" asks Pauline Kael. "This was no mere commercial enterprise," she says, as if this in itself is enough to condemn it, for Hollywood, as we know, has no time for anything that is not a commercial enterprise. It could not be Art, she says, because—wait for it—"what work of art in any field has ever resulted from group discussion and collective constructive criticism?"

Miss Kael, it seems, is horrified that the producers of *Salt of the Earth* read their screenplay to the people whom the film was about. Consult strikers when you are making a film about a strike? What a preposterous idea!

So *Salt of the Earth* is not commercial and it is not Art. It is—Communist propaganda. . . . "This," said the critic of the *New York Times*, is "a strong pro-Labour film." But to Miss Kael a strong pro-Labour film reveals only the hidden hand of the Cominform.

Miss Kael even objects to the film's title. "Bunuel's *Olvidados*," she says, "gives the lie to the concept that the oppressed are the salt of the earth." And this passes for criticism!

Salt of the Earth is "dreary," writes Miss Kael, and then devotes four pages of your magazine to it. Can it be that Miss Kael is worried and frightened—worried because a film of "the other America" can fight its way on to the screens, and frightened because there are people who had the courage to make it despite the witch hunt and the blacklist?

Yours sincerely,

RALPH BOND.

40 Parliament Hill, N.W.3.

The Editor, SIGHT AND SOUND,

Sir,—I read Miss Pauline Kael's article *Morality Plays—Right and Left* with interest and a good deal of surprise. The article is ably written and presents an interesting political thesis, but I found myself constantly wondering whether Miss Kael had, in fact, really looked at *Salt of the Earth*, or was merely using bits of the script to prop up her thesis. . . . The film is "as clear a piece of Communist propaganda as we have seen in many years," says Miss Kael. But, even on her own showing, the fact is not quite as clear as all that. These clever Communists apparently succeeded in disguising their "propaganda" so thoroughly that the majority of British critics, and a good many American ones, were unable to recognise Communist propaganda when they saw it. The truth so confidently stated by Miss Kael is, in fact, not clear at all. It has to be ferreted out, and it is to this task that Miss Kael applies herself in the body of that section of her article which deals with *Salt of the Earth*.

Miss Kael tries to substantiate her thesis (and I must repeat that, in spite of passages that seem to bear on the artistic quality of the film, it is a purely political thesis by an analysis of significant details from the film (or rather the script), with the intention of demonstrating that all these details add up to a picture that is recognisably Communist. I shall therefore go over the same details, trying to demonstrate in my turn that, to an unprejudiced observer, the pattern discovered by Miss Kael is simply not there—that it is not in the film, but is the

result of bias in Miss Kael's analysis.

1. The point about the part played by "group discussion," etc., in the production of the film can be briefly dismissed. In the first place, how the film was produced is surely irrelevant to the issue in hand . . . and in the second place, is this method of going to work really so strange in the case of a production sponsored by a Trade Union, and filmed on the spot, among its members?

2. The figure of the heroine, Esperanza. We may agree that the manner in which she is introduced to us has touches of the "eternal down-trodden woman." But is this really a particularly "Communist" piece of dramatic mythology?

3. "'Strike' in *Salt of the Earth* is used in its revolutionary meaning, as a . . . preparation for the big strike to come—a microcosm of the coming revolution." Is it? Miss Kael quotes Esperanza's words to Ramon: "I want to rise. And push everything up with me." Does that remark suggest red revolution to anyone not exclusively concerned with ferreting out Communists? The whole film is, in fact, a detailed demonstration of what is meant by this "pushing up": orderly, non-violent strike action for definite objectives. So far from being revolutionary, this is Trade Unionism of the most orthodox, "reformist" type.

4. As regards the piece of dialogue quoted by Miss Kael under the heading of "If the author had cut up a pamphlet and passed out the parts he wouldn't have given out anything very different from this" (p. 71). Is it really so unlikely that striking workers whose national and racial pride has been offended would talk about their employers in this way? "These strikers are always teaching each other little constructive lessons." Quite true. And is it not one of the main points of the film, that not only the "bosses" but also the workers need to be taught a lesson, and that there is no one to do it for them? And has it not been a point of almost every important American film dealing with social problems that in a democracy there are no divinely inspired leaders who can set everything right with a stroke of the pen, that people must roll up their own sleeves and teach each other the necessary lessons if abuses are to be rectified?

5. "Another facet of social realism" (i.e. the Communist Party line in art) "is the inflation of dialogue to the rank of folk wisdom . . . and folk wit." I am not quite sure that I know what this is all about. In support, Miss Kael offers two bits of dialogue, the passage ending "This instalment plan, it's the curse of the working class," and Esperanza's remark, "Finding scabs in Zinc Town, Ramon said, was like looking for a rich man in heaven." The first quotation seems to me, in its context, a plausible sentiment rather implausibly expressed. But would one call it "folk wisdom"? And while the second remark is a racy bit of colloquial dialogue, does it sound as if it had been inflated into anything beyond itself? Is it not Miss Kael who has done the "inflating" by claiming on the basis of these quotations that the film tries to show the "oppressed" as the "custodians of the real social truth"?

6. "Detail upon detail adds up to a picture of fascism," writes Miss Kael, referring to such scenes as the eviction, Ramon's beating-up by the deputies, etc. This is simply not true. There is not one of these details that we are not familiar with through a spate of films and books on America, whose authors no one could accuse of being Communists. And all together, they do not add up to fascism or anything like it—at least, for anyone who has had any first-hand experience of what fascism really means. To say that a vigorous and optimistic film that shows Americans successfully standing up for their rights as workers and citizens is trying to persuade us that America is a fascist country, is to use "fascism" with thought-blurring imprecision, as a mere term of abuse in the Communist manner.

7. With regard to the racial issue, Miss Kael writes, "If we want to know something about the treatment of minority peoples in the United States we don't look at one community, we examine and compare data in various communities. . . . We examine the extraordinary social phenomenon of pecking. . . . We don't assume that the life of the Mexican-American zinc miner is more symbolic of the treatment of minorities than the life of the corner grocer whose name is Ramirez."

There is a lot one could say on this subject, but I do not think it is necessary. The quotation speaks for itself. Who told Miss Kael that the film—a film that is, after all, a drama, and not a documentary or a sociological report—was intended to

provide us with comprehensive factual information about the treatment of minorities all over the United States? . . . Must every detail of the film be interpreted as being "symbolical" of America's treatment of its minorities, or anything else? Again, I think, Miss Kael has been guilty of "inflation" by seeing symbolical interpretations where none are claimed in the actual film.

8. Miss Kael contrasts the figure of Esperanza with the other miners' wives, who suggest "the active, liberated manner of free American women," with the intention of showing that she is an abstract propaganda figure. I do not think the contrast is as strong as Miss Kael claims. . . . But is it so out of keeping that the wife of a man who is shown to be particularly "backward" or traditional in his views on the place of women should appear a little more "feudal" in her looks and behaviour than some of the other women? "Esperanza . . . is the Madonna on the picket line," says Miss Kael. This is nowhere stated in the film. I suggest that the phrase came into Miss Kael's head because she was impressed by Miss Revueltas' fine, sensitive performance, and she then used this impression as a stick to beat the film with.

I have now dealt with the main points of detail by which Miss Kael supports her conclusions about the film. . . . My own conclusion is that the examples given by Miss Kael do not support her claim that *Salt of the Earth* is a clear piece of Communist propaganda. When seen in their dramatic context, no theory of Communist influence is needed to explain their presence in the film. And I would hazard the guess that if Miss Kael had not known that the Union sponsoring the film had been branded as Communist dominated, and that the writer, director and producer were blacklisted in Hollywood, she would not have denounced the film as a piece of Communist propaganda either. In my view, *Salt of the Earth* is a well-made, well-acted film-drama that tells the story of a strike with humour, humanity, and (considering the subject) remarkably little bitterness and violence. . . .

Yours sincerely,

G. M. HOELLERLING.

22a Avenue Road, N.W.8.

The Editor, SIGHT AND SOUND

Sir,—What was the matter with Pauline Kael when she saw *Salt of the Earth*? (I assume she did see it, and is not relying entirely on the published script.) To suggest it is false is quite unbelievable.

Very few in Britain can know New Mexico from personal experience, but many must know what a strike or a mine accident is like, and will immediately recognise the fidelity of these and other situations in *Salt of the Earth*.

All right, so it's propaganda—for a better understanding between races—but Miss Kael must have been very sour when she saw *Salt* that the humour passed her by, that she was not moved by the struggles of the Mexican-Americans for a better life, and that she found no entertainment in it. . . .

Yours faithfully,

CHRISTOPHER BRUNEL.

First House,
Bulstrode Way,
Gerrards Cross, Bucks.

The Editor, SIGHT AND SOUND

Sir,— . . . After making a pretence at fairness by mildly reproving *Night People* and Hollywood's other anti-Communist films, Miss Kael makes a vicious, political attack on *Salt of the Earth* under the guise of criticising its artistic qualities.

Her description of the film is distorted from beginning to end, and clearly derives from the viewpoint of one who has never been in close contact with working-class people. This is her attitude: "If American working people seek an image of their attitudes and beliefs they will find it in Hollywood films. . . . Though a Hollywood version glamorises their lives, it does justice to their dreams. If they did go to see *Salt* it is not likely that more than a small proportion would see anything that struck home, and that perhaps would be only as a reminder of depression days." Thus she not only encourages the phoney portrayal of American working people in the average Hollywood film, but even suggests that the conditions depicted in *Salt* do not appertain to the America of today. What would she have to say about the conditions shown in *The Grapes of Wrath*, one wonders? "Bunuel," she states further, "in *Los Olvidados* gives the lie to the concept that the oppressed are the salt of

the earth." What a statement! Bunuel did nothing of the kind—he made a sharply incisive study of a group of young hooligans, and would not dream of generalising in the way Miss Kael does.

Her article is full of contradictions. According to her, *Salt* is both "a dull movie" and "full of violence—it avails itself of the excitations of melodrama—but the violence is symbolic." Miss Kael finds practically everything in the film symbolic—its "truth," its characters and its situation. Moreover, "nothing could be further from reality than these abstractions performing symbolic actions in a depressed setting." Yet in the very next sentence she admits that the film "can seem 'true' to people who have been in the Imperial Valley, New Mexico or the Southern States"—rather a large section of the territory of the U.S. "Detail upon detail adds up to a picture of fascism." It does—it is meant to, in this particular set of circumstances. But is Miss Kael justified in concluding that it is "extremely shrewd propaganda for the urgent business of the U.S.S.R. . . . convincing Europe and Asia and the rest of the world that there are no civil liberties in the U.S.A. and that our capitalism is really fascism"? The film is quite explicit, while Miss Kael goes jumping from conclusion to conclusion.

Her attack on the film's makers, undoubtedly a courageous and forthright group, is no less vicious. . . .

Salt of the Earth may have artistic weaknesses; it was made subject to fearful pressures, heaven knows. But it is quite unworthy of SIGHT AND SOUND to subject it to an attack as blundering and distorted as Miss Kael's. I hope the film will achieve the wide showing, so far denied it, that it richly deserves as a tribute to the men and women to whom it is dedicated—"The free Americans who inspired this film—the brave Americans who played most of its parts."

Yours sincerely,

WALTER LASSALLY.

57 Onslow Road,
Richmond, Surrey.

The Editor, SIGHT AND SOUND,

Sir,— . . . I assume one could answer politically Miss Kael's naïve political analyses of the American scene, but . . . my major point is that such grinding of axes as made up most of her article is out of place in a periodical devoted to the cinema. It is at least evident that Miss Kael is a more experienced politician than critic, if we view the latter as one who is sensitive to what he or she sees on the screen.

Miss Kael claims that *Salt of the Earth* is a piece of Communist propaganda. If we investigate her reasons for this claim, the following syllogism emerges:—

1. Communism makes use of principles that no thoughtful American can reject.
2. This film asserts principles no thoughtful American can reject.
3. Therefore this film is Communist.

This may be normal McCarthy logic, but most of us would call it an illicit obversion.

If we apply a more orthodox logic to another point, we have:—

1. Witch-hunters consider themselves to be right, and call anyone who disagrees with them a Communist.
2. The writer, director and producer of this film have been called Communists by the witch-hunters.
3. Therefore these charges are open to serious doubt.

To me this does seem a sensible enough sequence.

Miss Kael mentions some other films—Eisenstein pointlessly (he was O.K.—he did the same things but on "a grand scale"), *Miracle in Milan* irrelevantly (a poetic fantasy with social implications, perhaps, but not a "social film"). . . . Then she says: "If we want to know something about the treatment of minority peoples . . . we don't look at one community, we examine and compare data in various communities." Surely the critical novice must realise that this is hardly the normal method of art? One normally takes what one considers a typical example which symbolises them all.

Miss Kael does in fact point to the strength of this film, although she treats it as a fault. . . . It is as a symbolic work that *Salt of the Earth* achieves greatness. The figures are indeed eternal and true, and the intercutting of Ramon's beating-up with Esperanza's birth-contractions one of the finest sequences I remember on the screen. The miserable living conditions are not sensationalised, but presented authentically as the back-

ground of the miners' lives; there is no false heroism; the union meetings are terse, restrained, without the flashy oratory one usually finds in the sentimental American "social" film; people speak as they do in real life. It is a pity that some critics are rather far away from real life and those sections of the populace who work with their hands.

The *Morality Plays* article was unworthy of SIGHT AND SOUND. . . .

Yours faithfully,
J. D. CORBLUTH.

Christ Church,
Oxford.

The Editor, SIGHT AND SOUND,

Sir,—. . . Miss Kael seems pained that *Salt of the Earth* adds up to a picture of fascism in America today. But what do we in Britain today consider the symptoms of fascism? Are they not such things as racial prejudice; book burning; imprisonment because of one's views and McCarthyist witch-hunting? To go from the general to the particular, it may interest your readers to know some of the incidents which occurred over the making of *Salt of the Earth*, which Miss Kael left out perhaps because they come from "Communist-dominated sources" and are therefore immediately suspect.

It appears that during shooting the cameras were overturned, members of the cast beaten up and Union halls fired by thugs. Also a leading Unionist's home was burned down and bullet holes found in Jenck's car (the film's Union organiser). This is not all, for it appears that Rosaura Revueitas (winner of the Mexican equivalent of the Academy Award) was arrested by the U.S. immigration authorities and released later only under strong protest from Mexico City's National Association of Actors.

The motion picture alliance called a congress to investigate the activities of those making *Salt of the Earth*, and efforts were also made to prevent the film even leaving America. . . .

In pointing out that the International Union of Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers was expelled from the C.I.O. as Communist dominated, she seems to feel that this is a magic password which therefore makes the film untouchable—and of course we are all horrified to hear that "*the writer, director and producer are blacklisted in Hollywood as fellow travellers*," and this in the land where to advocate racial equality, higher wages, better conditions, freedom of thought, etc., is likely to lead to one being classed as just that. . . .

Yours faithfully,
BARRY RUSSELL.

68 Highbury Grove,
Cosham, Portsmouth.

The Editor, SIGHT AND SOUND,

Sir,—*Salt of the Earth* is a bore, but that hardly makes it the monstrous case of double-think Miss Kael would have us believe. I should have thought that only the politically naïve or the politically so accustomed could accept its crude idealisations and blatant conclusions and cheer accordingly. Why, then, does Miss Kael attack it with the idiot ferocity and blind fecklessness of a Don Quixote charging windmills or sheep? She can scarcely pretend that it is a real giant. Perhaps she wishes to distract our attention from the real giant. Or pretend that there is only a harmless, good-natured sheep chewing ruminatively, squinting down at its star-spangled waistcoat.

Let the dust of Miss Kael's confused argumentativeness settle on the giant. . . . However, before the dust settles too thickly I should like to take a glance at the giant's face. If American films are to be taken no more seriously than advertisements, or as advertisements, what are they supposed to advertise? Presumably something favourable. The romanticised banality and political and social ineptitude of *I Want You* and *The Best Years of Our Lives*? How many American films take for granted the corruption of the police and of political bodies? Has Miss Kael seen *The Big Heat* and *Pushover*, two of the more recent and more fluent essays about this subject? The pursuit of riches and beauty? From the empty bigness of *Sabrina Fair* (palatial office settings and remarks like "there's a dollar where there was a dime" and "some dirty little kid will get his teeth fixed" to show the benefits of American industrialisation) down to the countless Bagdad-Arabian Nights opuses, the pattern is fixed. Social advantages? Political freedom? How about *Riot in Cell Block 11*? "Do you know why these things happened?" says the warden to the convict ring-

leader, referring to some very slight and urgent changes. "Because it got in the papers," is the answer. It does pay to advertise after all. . . .

Yours faithfully,
DAVID PITT.

75 Belgrade Road, N.16.

These protests were not entirely unexpected, since we knew that Miss Kael's article was controversial. Her estimate of the film still seems to us mainly just, and her whole article an acute analysis of tendencies in political film-making. As such, we published it. To those who reproach us with allowing "politics" to be raised in SIGHT AND SOUND, we can only answer that "Salt of the Earth", after all, is a political film, and a film critic is evading his responsibilities if he evades its implications. To those who reproach us with "witch-hunting" we answer that to call a film "Communist", and even to express anti-Communist views, is not in itself witch-hunting. We defend our right to discuss political films in the light of their political inferences (see also "On the Waterfront" in this issue), to publish what we consider an interesting and valuable analysis of a film, however controversial, and to allow other contributors to state their views (see David Robinson's Edinburgh festival report on "Salt of the Earth" in the same issue as Miss Kael's article). These occasions, fortunately perhaps, do not often arise. Whatever one's political sympathies, for instance, Hollywood's anti-Communist films have appeared crude and sometimes laughable; and the few Soviet anti-Capitalist ones we have seen, eccentric but dull. All this adds up to the fact that we stand by our general policy of printing articles that seem to us intelligent or stimulating or both, from whatever quarter, and of inviting readers to express disagreement, and agreement, whenever they feel inclined. Editor.

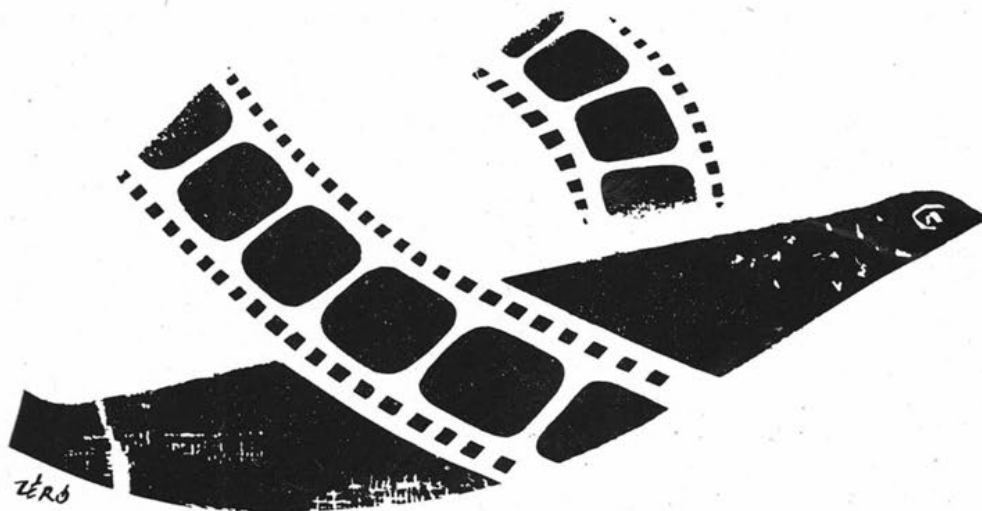
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VII

On another level, it has been interesting to note what one might call the commercialisation of neo-realism in some recent films: notably *Pane Amore e Fantasia*, Blasetti's *Tempi Nostri*, Zampa's *Anni Difficili* and *Anni Facili*. The first of these is a rustic comedy with resemblances to *Due Soldi di Speranza*; Comencini's is a regional film shot on location, but the authentic peasant girl of Castellani is now Gina Lollobrigida, who makes a brave, amiable try but is simply not the real thing, and much of the footage is occupied by a commonplace middle-aged romantic episode between a Carabinieri commander and the local midwife. De Sica's gay comic opera performance as the commander is amusing enough; but the director's indulgence in this calculated professional joke effectively destroys his other pretensions. All the same, this is a good-humoured entertainment infinitely preferable to *Tempi Nostri*, made with a vulgarity and gracelessness surprising in a director as experienced as Blasetti. Inflated with a small army of French and Italian stars (the former badly dubbed), the film adapts Pratolini's story of a schoolmaster (Yves Montand) reclaiming a prostitute (Daniele Delorme) in Florence; Moravia's tale of a poor young couple (Lea Padovani and Marcello Mastroianni) wondering whether or not to abandon their new baby; one of Marotta's Neapolitan sketches, about an amorous bus driver (de Sica); a primitive peasant interlude between aged village priest (Michel Simon) and aged crone (Sylvie); and a story of two impoverished aristocrats (de Sica and Elisa Cegani) meeting as extras on a film location. The last sketch is very well acted, with a subtlety constantly hindered by the direction, but the rest is a shambles; distinguished but unsuitable players are marooned in some actual settings which might as well be studio sets for all the interest Blasetti displays in them.

The pretence of "realism" becomes even more pernicious in Zampa's two fables, *Anni Difficili* and *Anni Facili*. Locations and expert type-casting are persuasively used to simulate actuality in these immoral comedies, which reduce social and political issues to a sly little joke. In the first, which begins in the '30's and ends in 1945, the "little man" is simply a bewildered pawn, the anti-fascists are as absurd and self-important in their way as the fascists, individual conscience is of no avail in a world ruled by bureaucrats; in the second, another "little man," proud of his anti-fascist record during the war, finds afterwards that the democratic friends from whom he expects help have become hidebound civil servants and is duped by a group of wealthy ex-fascists. Zampa dismisses personal convictions with a rueful shrug; in a bureaucratic world, the "little man" must compromise to survive. No doubt it would be kinder not to examine the implications of these two films.

VIII

One can even see a passing gesture to the "poverty" theme—suitablyedulcorated—in an unlikely film, *Carosello Napoletano*. Here a kind of Eternal Organ-Grinder figure, wandering through time and Naples with his shabby and always homeless family, comperes an elaborate musical revue of the spirit of that city. The director, Ettore Giannini, is well known in the theatre, and for his first film has transposed an entertainment on the lines of Katherine Dunham's "Caribbean Rhapsody" that he had already made successful on the stage. The result is interesting from several points of view. Grandiose spectacle, most of it involving a conveyor-belt reconstruction of various historical periods, is a major preoccupation of the Italian cinema, and Giannini's film is both a departure within the fashion and an attempt to create a new form (already imitated in a film called *Tarantella Napolitana*) for musical screen entertainment. The episodes range from a Saracen invasion to a history of Punchinello, from turn of the century music-hall to a kind of "Frankie and Johnnie" number with, most improbably, Yvette Chauviré dancing a slice of romantic low life. At its best, when the inspiration is genuinely popular—notably in the long comedy sequence of two girls fighting over a young street vendor—it has a splendid vitality. Giannini's ability to manoeuvre literally hundreds of people within a single frame, to create exciting and boisterous movement, is sometimes prodigious; it remains stagey in conception, but it doesn't matter. Unfortunately, much of the film is closer to the spirit of Monte Carlo than of Naples, due to a mistaken reliance on Massine (with the Marquis de Cuevas ballet) as choreographer; he overlays the Commedia

dell'Arte episodes and the mass dancing with his synthetic cosmopolitan touch. The film degenerates into an impossible potpourri of shoddy post-Diaghilev ballet, Gigli, French can-can, and the organ-grinder's family eternally wandering. The narrative design is incoherent, and what unity of style remains is derived from the consistently excellent sets by Mario Chiari and the costumes by Maria de Matteis, to which the Technicolor photography does full justice. It is a great pity that, with all his exuberance and visual flair, Giannini sacrifices true folklore to various artificial conventions which increasingly submerge the film's best qualities.

IX

The Italian renaissance will not be completely over so long as people like de Sica, Zavattini, Visconti and a few others manage to continue making, from time to time, the films they want. But as a movement, of course, neo-realism has lost its solidarity in all except the idealistic sense. Now that Italy has an expanding and ambitious film industry, it will be more and more difficult, other pressures apart, to find backing for a *Terra Trema*, an *Umberto D.* The neo-realist movement was, as Zavattini pointed out, a very inexpensive one; though few of the best films were widely popular in Italy, many made money abroad and more than covered their modest production costs. Within a flexible industry this kind of enterprise usually flourishes. But as film industries grow larger, more powerful, they also become rigidly exclusive. In Hollywood this problem has at various times been solved by allowing semi-experimental work on second features, but a country whose distribution system is based on single-feature programmes is denied even this outlet. From about 1945 to 1952, the artist in Italian films could work relatively untrammelled; close in spirit to the literary achievements of Moravia, Pavese, Pratolini and others, he could contribute to a national revival. Now, in Moravia's phrase, he "has it bad" again.

Here is an idea for a film to be called *Carosello Cinematografico*, a new type of screen entertainment designed to evoke the spirit of the film industry. The wandering organ-grinder is replaced by the wandering film director. Starting in the 1900's and continuing to the present day, he comperes a series of episodes taking place in studios all over the world. We see all kinds of films being made; occasionally the director is let in, gets a roof for the night, and makes a film; and for a moment reality inside the studio, and reality outside it, resemble each other. The last sequence shows the director setting off again. Inside the studio, all the lights, the sets, the gaily costumed extras are assembled, and the huge glittering carousel illumines the lonely road—it is night, of course—as the solitary figure dwindles into the distance.

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